

Monday, May 3, 2021

Greetings to all Meerkats & families!

I can hardly believe that we have arrived in May, the second to last month of the school year. Goodness, how time does fly when we are busy! The first week of May kicks off with Teacher Appreciation Week. In their honor, I will offer some acknowledgements of this wonderfully talented staff.

I will begin by pointing out that everyone who works here is a teacher of children! Ms. Renee teaches grace and courtesy every day as she runs the front office and models how to interact with others in a consistently positive way. Mr. Dennis teaches patience, persistence, and problem-solving every time a new challenge arises with this “old house.” He is cheerful and enjoys interacting with the students. Mr. Seth demonstrates excellent work ethic and pride in one’s work as he keeps the building up to standard. He, too, models kindness in his interactions with others.

Our school counselor, Ms. Green, contributes immeasurably to the well-being of our community in ways seen and less obvious. Once a week she attends meetings on behalf of students and connects families to resources when they need them. She is the chair of 504 plans, and she wears many other hats, too. Most importantly, she is an excellent listener, and students and staff alike know they are welcome to drop in to talk -- with or without a Green Slip!

Our IAs and SEIAs are indispensable when it comes to making sure students' needs are being met! They work collaboratively with the teachers and help to provide or to round out instruction. This includes lessons in Orton-Gillingham (reading support), making hands-on materials, finding and delivering appropriate resources, and even just being there as a fellow-human being to lean on. Our IAs and SEIAs were “the incredibles” when it came to small group tutoring, providing many of the first opportunities for students to come back into the building early in the school year. Many of them continued to provide this level of support even as the program closed. They have helped in countless other ways, too many to mention.

But our teachers are the ROCKSTARS! They have worked a year like no other in the history of education. They were tasked with the awesome responsibility of changing delivery of instruction from what they know to something they have never done before, with zero time to prepare. This includes all teachers: general education, special education, and specials. They pivoted midstream and became acquainted with new software (Schoology, Pear Deck, Kami, to name a few) and Google Meet to set up virtual classrooms. They turned themselves and their IAs in bitmojis so they could be “on-screen” when students logged in asynchronously. Our teachers, being Montessorians, prioritized hands-on learning and have made it a mission to provide materials for students to use throughout the year. That’s not all.

Teachers welcomed students (and their families) into their home classrooms. Next, they welcomed small groups of students back into the building, planning to see students 2-days per week in person, while also continuing to teach virtually. Then they were asked to prepare for

even larger groups of students to come in when in-person learning was expanded. Finally, they are considering what 4-day instruction would entail. Our teachers have changed their instructional model 4-5 times in one year, using a brand new skillset to meet new expectations that are dynamic and ever-changing. This means each time they finally get into a groove, the ground rules change. So let me reiterate, our teachers are ROCKSTARS. This has been a heavy lift, but they continue to show up with a smile on their face (the model of grace and courtesy), providing instruction in ways not before imagined, to students in their care.

Finally, our Montessori Teacher Specialist and User Support Specialist stepped up in ways not imagined. Ms. Amanda coordinated materials distributions and parent engagements, helped teachers with progress monitoring, and covered classrooms to ensure every student had a teacher -- from filling in in primary to covering in middle school. Ms. Dina took on the enormous task of matching tech to students and making herself available to troubleshoot any issues that arose. This included misbehaving chromebooks, broken electrical cords, and software issues, to name just a fraction of what she has done.

While many principals will acknowledge the heroic efforts of their teachers today, I want to make sure our community is aware of how much I appreciate our teachers and our staff, and assure you that your children couldn't be in better hands. MVMPCS is a wonderful school, but it is only that way because of our amazing staff.

I am grateful for this very talented and dedicated staff and I invite you to join me in appreciation of them.

Amy Dorman

Principal

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"If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else."

~Booker T. Washington



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