



MONTCLAIR KIMBERLEY ACADEMY

August 2017

Dear Primary School Parents,

The end of summer has crept up silently, giving no warning, ever so stealthily marching us toward fall. Long days of swimming, camp, and vacations to near and distant lands will soon be recalled through stories and pictures. Soon the alarm clock will ring, a chill will fill the air, and the days will become shorter.

The voices of MKA's summer campers have now left the Primary School building and the halls are again deserted. There is a rhythm to the school year and to summer. June is a time for good-byes and closure. For teachers and administrators, summer is a time for renewal and reflection. Throughout the summer months, much preparation occurs to ready the school for the upcoming year. Planning, course work, reading, thinking, and new ideas are shared as the curriculum is edited and revised to ensure optimal learning experiences for each child.

Energy and commitment give a school and all of its community members vitality and life. At the Primary School, much of our energy is committed to sustaining a "culture of care" that is part of the fabric of the everyday life of our school. In our "culture of care," we are committed to the belief that students should be at the heart of our decision making, problem solving, and planning. Our guiding light is to do what is best for our students. Education goes beyond curriculum; in its most noble form, it is a partnership that is attended to and nourished. This partnership showcases the social-emotional vibrancy of our community.

My hope, as we anticipate and think about the new school year, is for us to also think about the community and partnerships we are forming. The research is clear: student success is directly tied to strong teacher, student, and parent relationships. As we greet our students in September, and start to know them as learners and unique individuals, it is through strong partnership that we will collectively shape the ethos of our community. Each September brings, as well, new families to the Primary School; I would like to extend another welcome to all the new members of our school community.

At the Primary School, we create an environment in which our learners, new and returning, can soar in academic and social-emotional arenas through exceptional teachers and instruction, as well as a purposeful and well-researched curriculum. Our faculty partner with each student to set learning and social/emotional goals as they work together to grow towards proficiency in those areas. As Headmaster Tom Nammack wrote in his August letter, "Social and Emotional Learning at MKA helps students to build an essential foundation for academic and personal success by developing the self-awareness, empathy, and good character needed to make

responsible decisions and create positive relationships with others.” Our students are empowered to make good choices and develop their social-emotional competencies through community building, effective use of "teachable moments," and academic and social-emotional lessons provided within the framework of the daily curriculum.

Faculty Summer Work

It is essential that a vital school community have faculty who are informed and have a treasure trove of strategies to bring out the best in each student. The faculty’s work this summer has been exemplary in so many ways: purposeful, collaborative, innovative, and exciting. In the past few months, 100% of our Primary School faculty have participated in varied professional development opportunities, both internal and external. All five grade level teams met to work on various initiatives across our curriculum, such as our revised math program, Everyday Math 4; curricular calendars; and areas of literacy, specifically the program Words Their Way and reading/writing units of study. Many veteran and new faculty members attended both MKA’s Technology and Learning and Integrated Ethics Institutes and are in the midst of planning some exciting projects for our students. Other coursework ranged from attendance at the Writing Institute at Teachers College at Columbia University, to workshops on Collaborative Proactive Solutions with Ross Greene, and a weeklong course on Responsive Classroom. Another faculty member attended a conference provided by the North America Reggio Emilia Alliance. Additionally, two faculty members, Erica DeTrolio and Anne-Sophie Roure, were hard at work on Blauvelt grants from MKA to develop initiatives that connect existing curricula with our Culture of Integrated Ethics. Erica researched sustainability education in early childhood and Anne-Sophie researched educational methods that increase awareness of social justice issues in third grade French classes. Others pursued areas relevant to their positions at MKA, such as planning diversity and inclusion assemblies, developing plans for guided reading, refining Fine and Performing Arts, Library and World Language curricula, and investigating digital portfolio implementation. The faculty are certainly role models for lifelong learning.

New Roles

I want to congratulate both Margaret Gonzales (Assistant Head of the Primary School) and Maureen Bates (Primary School Curriculum Coordinator) on their new roles. They have both been actively involved all summer working with different teams of faculty in Idea Labs on many of the topics listed above as well as with the Pre-K and K teams on expanding the Reggio curriculum.

As you know, last spring saw more attrition with faculty and staff than is usual at the Primary School. Our thanks and gratitude go to all of our retirees (Donna Carrara, Jodi Smith, Barbara DuRant, Maurine Toth, Paula Fiory and Betsy Burgess), as well as to Rosie D'Urso as they move on to new adventures. We will miss them and wish them the very best. We also anxiously await news any day from Erica DeTrolio on the upcoming birth of her baby. Erica will be taking maternity leave this fall and joining our Pre-K team when she returns in January 2018.

I am excited to share that several Primary School team members will be taking on new roles within our campus. Congratulations go to Breanna Jones and Spencer Pyke who have moved from staff members to faculty members on the Pre-K and K teams, respectively. We want to send kudos to both Breanna and Spencer for pursuing and earning their Master's degrees. We are thrilled to welcome them to our early childhood teams and look forward to their contributions in

their new roles. In addition, several veteran faculty members will be fulfilling new roles as they return. As previously announced at the conclusion of the school year, Crystal Glynn will move from the Science Specialist position to become the Primary School Librarian. Crystal holds an MLS in Library Science and filled in for our former librarian, Rosie D'Urso, while she was on maternity leave. Sheila Smith will join the second grade team; Daniela Vespucci will move to the third grade team; and Alex Langbein will join the Kindergarten team. In addition to her Extended Day responsibilities, Katie Parke will also assume the role of part-time Recess Aide at the Primary School. We are so lucky to have such talented individuals in our community.

New Faculty Members

While change can be unsettling, it brings new energy, ideas, and perspectives to an already strong faculty/staff. I am so happy to introduce you to the talented, experienced, and outstanding professionals we are adding to our already incredible team for the 2017-18 school year. It is my privilege to introduce the following new faculty/staff to you:

Melanie Bieber joins the Primary School as the Counselor. Melanie is an alumna of MKA, class of 2003. Melanie graduated Phi Beta Kappa and Magna Cum Laude from the University of Maryland, College Park, with a double major in Psychology and Criminal Justice. Melanie holds a Master's of Education in Human Development and Psychology from Harvard University and a Master's of Philosophy in Education Counseling from the University of Pennsylvania. Melanie's previous employment as a counselor includes Leadership Prep Bedford-Stuyvesant, where she worked with students in grades kindergarten through eight. Last year, Melanie moved back to New Jersey and accepted the role of creating and developing the counseling program at Oradell Public School system. In her spare time, Melanie loves to spend time with her husband, Evan, and new son, Zachary. She is currently training for her first marathon. Melanie is excited to return to the MKA community.

Jocelyn Fine joins the Primary School as the Art Specialist and Chair of Fine and Performing Arts. Jocelyn has spent the past ten years as the Lower School Art Teacher at the Chapin School in New York City. Jocelyn graduated with a dual degree in Studio Art and Art History from the University of Vermont and went on to study painting conservation in Italy at the Istituto per L'Arte e il Restauro in Florence, Italy. After working for many years in museums throughout New York City, Jocelyn went on to earn a Master's degree in Art Conservation from Columbia University. Prior to working at Chapin, Jocelyn taught and developed curricula in the arts and conservation science for children from kindergarten through high school. As a lifelong learner, Jocelyn has completed continuing coursework in art education at Bank Street College and has been trained in Responsive Classroom and inquiry-based learning. In her spare time, Jocelyn loves to spend time with her family. She is an abstract painter and yoga enthusiast. Jocelyn is thrilled to be joining the MKA community.

Suzanne Giarrusso joins the Pre-Kindergarten team in the position of Maternity Leave Replacement for Erica DeTrollo through mid-December. Suzanne comes to MKA from her position as a Young 3's Teacher at the Children's House in Verona. Suzanne earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from Bucknell University, where she was a member of the women's lacrosse team. Suzanne is the current Varsity Lacrosse Coach at Verona High School. She previously taught kindergarten at the Pingry School, where she also coached lacrosse. She has also taught and coached at schools in the San Francisco area. In her spare time,

Suzanne enjoys spending time with her husband and three sons. In addition to family, Suzanne enjoys reading and running. Suzanne will co-teach with John Odell in Pre-K A.

Fay Lonsinger joins the MKA Primary School as a part-time Recess Aide. Faye previously attended MKA and has been connected with the school in various capacities: on the fields, in the classroom, and even in admissions. While a student at MKA, Faye met and later married a fellow MKA graduate, her husband Brian. Faye earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Georgetown University, where she majored in English with a minor in Fine Art. Faye is on the Board of Lacrosse in Verona and has coached every level from mini laxers to the 7th/8th grade level. In her spare time, Faye enjoys walks in the woods and spending time with her three children and husband. One of Faye's goals is to run in the Amazing Race!

Huma Niazi joins our Primary School team as the Science Specialist. She relocated from Shanghai last year, where she taught at the German School of Shanghai. Huma has over ten years of experience teaching in international schools across the globe in Germany, China, Dubai, and the United States. She is a passionate science teacher who is dedicated to encouraging and supporting inquisitive minds to explore, investigate, and hypothesize. Huma holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Biosciences and a Bachelor of Education degree from Jamia University, as well as a Master's degree in Education from the University of Delhi, India. She has authored a book entitled *Professionalizing Teacher Education: Consumer Based Perspective*. As an enthusiastic traveler, Huma believes that traveling is about developing compassion and empathy for people and cultures across the world. She brings these values to her classroom to develop global citizenship in her students. Huma is a mother of two sons. She speaks four languages and enjoys hiking with her family.

I am sure that you join me in welcoming all of the new talented faculty and staff to MKA. I know that they look forward to meeting the students and their families.

In Other News...

The maintenance crew at MKA never rests. While the faculty and staff have been honing their skills this summer, the Primary School has undergone some renovations in the Academic Office, as well as in the pre-kindergarten bathrooms. The library will have a new circulation desk as well as new shelving. These are just highlights of the many maintenance tasks completed by James Castelli, Director of Physical Plant, and his amazing crew. Now that Junior Star Camp has concluded, the cleaning crew is busy transitioning the building to prepare for the new school year.

Important Items Forms and Events

All necessary forms and important start-of-school documents have been posted on our website (<http://www.mka.org/back2school>). We ask that all families check the “Forms and Info - ALL GRADES” section. Grade-specific information is provided under the Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, First Grade, Second Grade, and Third Grade sections.

The full calendar for Primary School events can be found on the school website (www.mka.org).

Individual class websites, together with Primary School forms and other useful information, can be found in the Primary School section of the Parent Portal, accessible from the homepage of the MKA website. New families will receive an email with login information shortly.

Safety and Security

The safety and security of the students is of the utmost importance to us. For that reason, we require that all parents and visitors to the Primary School sign in at the front desk upon entering the building and complete a visitor's badge to wear while in the building. For fire safety reasons, there is no parking allowed within designated fire lanes marked in yellow.

In addition, all communications to our office regarding play dates, change in transportation, attendance, etc., needs to be emailed to **psnotifications@mka.org**.

First Day of School

Our first day of school is September 6th, from 8:00 a.m. - 2:20 p.m. That morning, faculty, staff and administration will be available to guide all students to their classrooms to meet their teachers and classmates. We know that the first day of a new school year is anticipated by all. For that reason, you are welcome to walk your child into the building and to their classroom if you wish on the first day of school.

I hope that the last few weeks of summer bring you and your family relaxation and fond memories. As the new books and supplies are checked in, final cleaning of the building takes place, and the classrooms are decorated, the feeling of anticipation builds. This is a particularly exciting time at the Primary School. We have many important initiatives in place to ensure the best education for each student so that excellence is in reach for all. We look forward to sharing all our exciting initiatives with you at Back-To-School Night on Tuesday, September 26th.

I look forward to greeting your wonderful, talented children in a few short weeks and anticipate a strong start to another school year. If you have any questions or needs, please do not hesitate to call the Primary School Office at 973-783-8805 or email me at gkriegel@mka.org. My very best wishes to all. See you in September!

Warmest regards,

Ginger

Virginia D. Kriegel
Head of Primary School