Dear Lafayette Families-

Wow. What an incredible start to our year! After several years of planning, 16 months of construction, countless hours of meetings, decisions, contractors, subcontractors, trailers, metal walkways, blizzards, tents, and so much more – we did it. We successfully opened our 2016-2017 school year in our incredible new school building. What a day it was!

Thank you to everyone for your patience and grace at drop off. After a smooth morning drop off, teachers and students spent the day getting to know one another, classmates, and the building. As I walked through the building, I saw smiling faces all around. I am beyond confident in the incredible work our teachers do with our students, not just the first day but every day. We have hit the ground running!

On Tuesday, students will go to our “SAMM” Assemblies. “SAMM” is our school wide, positive behavior support structure. It stands for “Speak Mindfully, Act Mindfully, and Move Mindfully”. We actively teach the children the positive expectations in every aspect of the building and then celebrate when we achieve those expectations. We also incorporate our Peace of Mind curriculum and social emotional teaching in “Peace Class.” If you hear your students talking about “SAMM” tickets – ask what positive thing they did to earn a ticket. Teachers utilize the blue tickets to reinforce positive behaviors throughout the day. At the end of the week, I do a raffle at lunch with the students to celebrate our successes. Our “prizes” are more about celebrating great work, than on the “thing.” Therefore, we hand out small, embroidered zipper tags with a positive message. Students collect these throughout the weeks – look for them hanging on lunch bags and backpacks. Look for more information about SAMM posted on our website.

Also, this week, our “Specials” will start on Wednesday! Our Specials classes are Art, Music, Spanish, Peace, and two days of PE. Because we have so many great things to offer our students, we will be using a 6-day schedule rotation for specials. For example, a class may have Art on Day 1 and Music on Day 2, rather than on Monday and Tuesday. We know this may be slightly confusing at first….especially for wearing PE sneakers…but our teachers will make sure to communicate their schedule with you. The advantage of a 6-day rotation schedule is that we don’t lose any instructional time over the course of the week for Reading, Math, Social Studies, or Science and we are still able to fit in all of our rich Specials.

Other phrases you might hear after the first week of school include “Flex Time” and “WIN time.” Flex time is from 1:00 – 1:30 and is a flexible time that teachers can utilize for a variety of activities. Some examples may include quiet reading for pleasure, special projects, Newspaper, Library time, Buddy Reading, and other school wide clubs and activities. More information will be shared throughout the year as we build this timeframe across 1st – 5th grades.

WIN time is back! “What I Need” (WIN) is 30 mins for Reading and 30 mins for Math. These are 30-minute blocks where students are grouped according to…what they need! This could be enrichment, intervention, fluency practice, book clubs, or an extra group session with their teacher. The Reading Specialists (Laura Pajor and Kathy Echave) and the Math Specialists (Edie Stanton and Erin Duchinsky) work closely with the grade levels K – 5 to build these 30 minutes. It is a creative and responsive way for us to meet students at their level and keep pushing their individual growth. For more information about WIN time, check in with your classroom teacher in a few weeks.

As the students get the lay of the land, I will work to shed light on what our day looks like for your student. Our goal is always joyful, rigorous learning – including social emotional learning, the arts and all academic areas. If you ever have any questions, please don’t hesitate to reach out to your child’s teacher. They are incredible people who care deeply about the growth of your child. We are in for a year of limitless potential and incredible adventures.

As I wrap up this first installment of the Tuesday Bulletin, I would like to express my pure gratitude to everyone in this community – our students, teachers, staff, administrators, custodians, office staff, HSA, individual parents, SKANSKA, DGS, DCPS, the ANC, the neighboring “envelope group,” and anyone I may have missed! The modernization over the last two years could not have happened without the incredible teamwork of everyone involved. While the process was not always sunshine and roses, (what is!?), it was a fruitful process that has resulted in a stunning learning environment for our children. I personally want to thank everyone for the large and small acts of support, kindness, feedback, patience and grace. At the end of the day, we are all still smiling and children are beaming with pride in their new school. Thank you.

With love and thanks,

Dr. B