



Owl Families,

The 2024-2025 school year is well underway, and seeing our Owls return with so much excitement and enthusiasm has been reinvigorating. It's set the stage for another positive year of learning and growth at Aspen Ridge.

Did you know that our Owls grew, on average, TWO inches over the summer?

Well, that might be a made-up statistic, but it also happens to be one of my favorite observations when we come back each fall...seeing how much students have grown. Whether in height or in maturity, there is never a lack of sheer wonder at how time truly is a thief; growth is inevitable.



We have been busy over the summer planning for great things this year and focusing on what slight changes we can do to make a big difference for our students and families. If you haven't read *212°- The Extra Degree* (by Sam Parker) and are interested, I have two copies left that I will happily gift. (Keep reading to find out how you can get your hands on one of these copies.) The premise of the book is how just the slightest of adjustments can make huge differences. Did you know that water will boil with just one small degree of change, from 211° to 212°, creating the energy that runs a steam engine? Or that Olympians can win a gold medal by just a fraction of a second? It may seem insignificant to some, but it was definitely meaningful to the 40 US Olympians that brought home the gold this past summer.

Aspen Ridge has always prided itself on being a community of invested families and educators determined to build a place for our students to become trusted, productive, problem-solving community members that will make this community a better place for all. A school built BY the community to build UP the community.

At Aspen Ridge, our focus for this year is going the extra degree to make THE difference. While we are busy making commitments inside of the 8:00am-3:15pm school day, you, as our trusted, productive, problem-solving parents and guardians, can also join in on this initiative outside of school hours. Below are some of the small things that you can do to go that extra degree.

- **Read with your child every night.** With just 10 minutes of daily reading outside of school, your child can pick up an additional 700,000 words a year (which equates roughly to 10 chapter books.) With just a 10 minute reading routine each evening, you can stimulate your brain (which helps prevent cognitive decline), expand your knowledge, learn new things, enhance your vocabulary, reduce stress, improve focus and concentration, develop empathy, enhance creativity, sleep better, and support mental health. Need ideas for some good read aloud books or chapter books for your child? Reach out to our librarian, Ms. Culver. (She loves reading with her whole soul!)
- **Practice math facts.** That's right! Grab a set of flash cards or make your own, and help your child with their numerical automaticity (the ability to recall information without thinking about it.) While this may sound mundane and something that can be done at school, the few extra minutes that you take to do this every night will actually boost your child's mathematical problem solving skills as they continue to advance from year to year. Memorization is not new and it's not frowned upon. The better your child can recall information seamlessly, the more confident they will become when new learning takes place. (Same with reading!)
- **Volunteer at school at least once this year.** We always welcome you into the school and know that you being around makes a HUGE difference. Your child (as well as others) seeing you volunteer and spending time at school correlates to school being important, which correlates to better behaved and well adapted children. You may be thinking, "Well that sounds great, but I have a full-time job. How am I supposed to ALSO give time at school?" The beauty of volunteering is that it comes in multiple forms. Whether you are helping to do something from home or being a part of our safety team on Owl Watch, collaborating and engaging with school is what turns "good" schools into OUTSTANDING schools. ***Do you have a stronger passion than most and have time to invest as a board member for Aspen Ridge? Click [this link](#) to let our current Board of Directors know. Our board meets on a monthly basis, is made up of a group of five volunteers, and is currently seeking out interested individuals to add value to their current group.***

- **Make school attendance a priority.** Showing up to school every day, and on time, is no small feat. It takes persistence, consistency, and stamina to ensure your Owl gets to school. I completely understand the struggle that it can sometimes be. But learning is a marathon...not a sprint. While a missed day of school every once in a while may not seem like a big deal, it is. A day can not be recreated through a make-up homework assignment. Learning takes place all day long, and often the unplanned, incidental learning that takes place in the hallway on the way to enrichment can be some of the most rich, deep learning experiences had. We only get your Owls for 171 days this year (that still leaves 194 for vacations, breaks, mental health days, etc.). Make it your personal goal for your child to get perfect attendance (or almost perfect attendance) this year.
- **Go that little extra mile and SMILE.** Smiling is easy, it's free, and it not only supports your brain chemistry, but there is also a connection to immunity. Smiling increases serotonin, which decreases depression, which boosts immunity, which supports attendance. Add in the person's name that you are smiling to and not only does it build confidence, but people feel seen. And isn't that what most everyone wants? To be seen?

These small suggestions are quite powerful when practiced routinely and are easy to implement. I hope you will try one (or all) for not only your own child, but for the community of children that our school was built for.

We have so many fun days of learning ahead of us and great opportunities for involvement on the horizon. Whether you are purchasing coffee (which we have already sold nearly 300 bags), showing up for parent conferences in a few weeks, or getting your child to school on time every day, we thank you for being a part of our community and for doing your part to keep our school THE best school of choice around. Aspen Ridge is not only our school and our community...it's our legacy. Our children, as our legacy, deserve our personal best. Let's add that extra degree this year and see the big difference it can make!

And if you made it this far and are interested in a copy of 212°, send a quick email to me at csalmeron@aspenridgeprepschool.org.

#itsagreatdaytobeanowl

Charla Salmeron