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Letter from Principal
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It's funny - this Wednesday was my 17th "first day of school" as an educator, with many as a teacher and several more as an administrator, as well as my fifth as principal at Davis. One constant every year is that I often have trouble sleeping the night before the first day. I've always been very excited - to see the kids, see families, and launch the year's program, so full of hope and possibility. It was certainly different this year, but still so exciting to embark on another new journey! We all wish we could snap our fingers and have a traditional first day/week just like any other - new backpacks, fresh haircuts, an outfit we laid out for two days, a wicked cool Trapper Keeper. You get it.

After our pick-up windows this past Friday, we all retreated back inside and I began circulating the building to check in on teams. Sure enough, grade teams were huddled together in classrooms planning out the first full week until late in the day - talking out how to map out this first week, breaking up the longer morning blocks, balancing on/off screen time, etc. If there's every any doubt that a lot of planning goes into things, let's leave it outside at this point. These teachers are working their tails off. This past week was like none other.

Two things became evidently clear talking with them about this coming week.

First, this will be better than the spring. Family and staff feedback were strong and we incorporated what we could - more live engagement, more time for small groups and conferences, new resources, on/off screen options, and much more. We're going to have fun.

Second, it will be imperfect and we'll learn a lot from this first week. Things will adapt in upcoming weeks. We're going to have to build these kids up in stamina, especially the youngest ones. So, THANK YOU for your patience and flexibility as we see what works well and what to improve each week. Teachers are responsible and reflective professionals who will know how to adjust as we continue sailing into this new ocean.

I'll also say this. Just like an ocean voyage in uncharted waters, there will be a captain. I'll captain the fleet, but your teachers captain their ships. You're on that crew. And just like any maiden voyage, there will be those with opinions and concerns; not maybe - there will be. When you notice something imperfect this week, before you get out your computer and hit 'Send' on an email, remember that we are all reflecting, too. We love feedback, but it's much better taken when it's kind, compassionate, and timely. My guess is that if something didn't 'click' well for you or your child, your teacher may have noticed it, too. This virtual world is tough waters to navigate. We have to remain highly reflective on our end, but compassionate and understanding on the parent side, too. As you know well, I see both of these perspectives alongside Sebastian, at home.

The year will be what you make of it. I, for one, think it will bring out the best in our teachers, staff, students, and families. We *will* be back...eventually. This is our first step. I am prepared to embrace the uniqueness that is this year and be excited for a new start - one we've never had before and one that we may never have again. We will embrace the challenge and make it our own - staring right into the big waves and choppy waters. As a principal, I will work to lead by example, reflect with our staff, and continue to work on leading improvement each week.

As a parent, I will be flexible and show grace for my son's classroom captain. I'll be there to support Sebastian's teacher with anything she needs to be successful. She will *never* get one of those emails that sting - calling teachers out for mistakes and imperfections; the ones that feel good when hitting 'Send' but are read on the other side like, "Really?" Negative energy is toxic and, sometimes, contagious. If you are resolute that this year is going to stink and focused on the negatives...guess what? For you, it probably will. And in turn, it might very well for your kid, too.

So, you want to be positive, but it's easier said than done. In that case, reflect on some of those guiding principles that we discussed during our info sessions. To some, they're the 'fluff' slides on the slide deck, but those principles really do ground us and help us achieve our vision of 'embracing our diversity to drive our success, for every child, every day'.

Relationships - they are the foundation of schooling. We had the advantage of having built them when we went remote in March. It's a different ballgame to start a school year. If we don't nurture authentic classroom community, we will make our educational objectives that much more difficult to attain.

Joy - students *want* to be back at school; they're craving the experience and interaction. But, we all know that enthusiasm can be stifled all too quickly. Some of our kids are coming back to school with learning gaps, recession wounds, family job loss, pandemic-related deaths, and more. It's our responsibility, together, to nurture a joyous atmosphere and buoy spirits.

These aren't just for teachers and principals, but for all of us. Let them anchor you in these early weeks and work to nurture those principles, as well, in your home. As these weeks evolve, additional principles will start to emerge more prominently. Like 'Data' – we know we need to get some info on our kids and use it to differentiate our instruction. Who knows their letter sounds? What level books is s/he reading? Or, 'Families & Community', as you'll see we will be putting forward resources and live workshops that are responsive and designed for what you might need to support at home, too. And, of course, 'Student Agency' – our schedule is built to grow out of a one-size-fits-all approach to assignments that allow teachers to challenge kids in the unique ways that they need, just like in school.

There are more, of course, but those are a few examples of how our principles are strongly rooted in our entry plan this year and will continue as we shift in/out of different phases.

So, for this week, let's keep our kids smiling. Let's help nurture these new relationships. And let's be positive, compassionate and supportive. It's going to be a long journey this year, so we will all do our part to get it started the right way. :)

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