August 2019

Dear Fisk Parents,

I begin with a question. True or False? All of the content that we will teach your child this year can be found on the internet. True! Long gone are the days where teachers are the content experts who hold all of the knowledge and only they can deliver it to their students. Hundreds of thousands of kids across the world will learn the same educational standards as our students, but never step out of their houses and into a traditional brick and mortar school. All of us have options for our children and their learning. As a parent of two girls, I watch daily how their learning has drastically changed since my days as a student, teacher and even my eight years as Principal at Fisk School. I watch my middle and high school girls at home collaborate with friends and teachers in digital chat rooms, listen to Podcasts about any topic and very often check with our resident “Alexa,” our virtual assistant, for help with Math problems, spell checking and reciting of definitions. Long gone are the days where teachers stand in the front of the classroom unloading content to the students as they sit and passively absorb information. Our children are learning much differently than you and I did and we are all better off for it. They have more opportunities and resources than we did at their age as a result. However, there is one very important aspect of traditional education that technology in 2019 has yet to replicate - the relationship between teacher and student.

In 1943, American psychologist Abraham Maslow wrote an influential paper titled, "A Theory of Human Motivation." He stated his belief that people need to have their basic needs met before they can grow to their fullest potential as human beings. How does Maslow’s pyramid written seventy-six years ago connect to current day education and Fisk School? It is as simple as this: if your child does not have their basic and psychological needs met, they will never reach the top of their personal pyramid where real learning and growth happens. The Self-fulfillment peak of the pyramid is where we want all of our students to be. Google, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and any other computer based program cannot support a student in reaching this stage in Maslow’s pyramid alone. However, a school that has dynamic, loving and supportive staff members will set the stage to foster kids in their own journey. This is what sets Fisk School apart from other places, including the internet. Our number one priority is the physical safety of our students, but our emphasis on our school environment and the relationships we build with ALL of our students is a close second. Relationships matter.
You may have seen the viral TED Talk “Every Kid Needs a Champion,” where 40-year educator Rita Pierson confidently states, “Kids don’t learn from people they don’t like.” This statement has been proven true over and over again since the first one room schoolhouse was built. Two years ago our staff watched this TED Talk at our opening day staff meeting, and it reinforced our daily focus that our relationships with our students and their families matter. As we prepare to open our school for the 2019-2020 school-year, we embrace our work of building relationships with our students and families. Our teachers are excited to welcome all of our students into their classroom communities with a goal that each student reaches the top of their own pyramid, so real learning can happen. Fisk School is still your best option and we will work diligently to prove it.

Our important work will begin with our traditional practice of posting class lists on the front doors on **Friday, August 23**rd **at 3:00pm**. I will send out an electronic notification using our district application once we have posted the list. This practice serves as a reminder to follow Fisk School on our many social media platforms. I also ask that you allow your device to “accept” notifications. Throughout the school year, I will be sending lots of information using this application. You can also follow Fisk School on Facebook and Twitter. As you check the class list and learn what teacher your child will have, you can rest assured that your child has been placed in a classroom with a highly qualified educator, who will work tirelessly for one hundred and eighty days to bring out the best in your child. Fisk teachers are exceptional and I am confident that you will experience this as the year unfolds.

On **Tuesday, August 27**th **5:00-6:30**, you are invited for our **Back-to-School Ice Cream Social** sponsored by our fantastic PTA. The purpose for this evening is to meet your teacher(s) and other staff members, learn who your child’s classmates will be, and to reacquaint yourselves with your fellow Fisk families. This event is held outside on the on the blacktop and ballfield. Be sure to check in at our PTA table when you arrive to learn more about the many events planned for the school year. Also, be sure to stop by our “transportation desk” located outside to inform us of your child’s after school plan so that we can ensure a smooth and safe dismissal. Please see the information below for the schedule of events:

5:00-6:00 **Ice Cream Social** – Meet your child’s teacher while enjoying an ice cream sundae. Teachers will be available outside and wearing Fisk T-shirts with their names and grade-level on the back!

6:00-6:30 **Kickball Game** – Staff, students and parents play a fun game of kickball on the ballfield. Don’t forget your sneakers
Parents often ask if their children need specific school supplies. As a general rule, we will provide your child with what they need. We take pride in providing all of the supplies that your child will need to learn at Fisk. Parents will typically provide their child a backpack and lunchbox. If you are unable to buy a backpack, please contact Brenda Carino, Fisk Administrative Assistant or Greta Gauthier, School Counselor and they will provide a backpack for your child.

School will officially begin on Thursday, August 29th. I encourage parents to come by the school that morning to take your annual first-day-of-school photo as your child exits the bus in front of the school. This location makes for a memorable photo. Like each day after, students will be dropped off any time between 8:15 - 8:45 a.m. for morning recess. At 8:45 a.m. a whistle will sound and school will begin at 9:00 a.m. Dismissal will be at 3:00 p.m. If you need busing and lunch information please visit https://sau57.org/ssl/parents

Predicting great excitement and potentially a few nervous students (and parents) especially among our new kindergarteners and first graders, I invite parents of those students to accompany their children to Fisk on that first morning. At 8:45 a.m. I will huddle all of the students and some parents to welcome them before they enter, as well as provide them with some information on entering the school after recess. Students will then be brought into school by their classroom teacher. If you feel that it is needed, you can follow your child into the building to help them get settled. Your child’s teacher will welcome you both and briefly discuss some general classroom procedures as they begin to build their classroom community. At 9:20 a.m., parents will leave the classrooms so the children and teachers can begin their day. If you are unable to attend on the first day and your child will be arriving on the school bus, know that we will welcome them off of the bus, help them to the playground and then to their classroom, as we will on every successive day.

On the first few days of school, additional school staff will be in the parking lot to assist parents and students. Our morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up procedures have not changed from last year. Students dropped off by bus and car will still take place in the front of the school. Afternoon car rider pick up will still loop around back as normal. Car rider signs will be provided to each family to help the staff facilitate a safe and efficient dismissal should your child be a car rider at any point during the school year. Typically, the first few days run a bit slower until everyone becomes comfortable with these routines. Our goal is always for the safety of our students before anything else.

Another event for your calendar is our Open House which is scheduled for Tuesday, September 3rd at 6:00 p.m. This evening is for adults only and provides parents and teachers the opportunity to discuss the upcoming school year. Teachers will also share opportunities for you to become involved in your child’s classroom community.

I look forward to kicking off another school year and sharing with your family all of the wonderful experiences that an elementary school year has to offer. It is my commitment that your child will attend a safe, loving, neighborhood school where their personal and emotional health is our first priority. We will teach your child the skills necessary to be successful in their own personal journey. Thank you for your continued support and for making Fisk a very special place. I extend my sincere gratitude for sharing your children with us.

Wishing all of our Fisk families a wonderful 2019-2020 school-year.

Warm Wishes,

George W. Murray
George Murray
Principal, Mary A. Fisk School