

Morris School



Home of the
Mavericks!

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ph. 204-746-2612 fax: 746-2126



**Achieving Success
Together**

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May 2, 2008

RE: 2008-2009 school year

Dear Kindergarten – Grade 5 Parents,

The 2007-2008 school year is winding down quickly and we are well into the planning stages for the 2008-2009 school year. As usual there are several issues that relate to your child's education and we wish to share these with you and remind you of some important dates.

1. The class structure in the K-6 area will see a change next year. The classes will be as follows:

- 1 – Kindergarten class
- 2 – 1/2 Multi-age classes
- 1 – 2/3 Multi-age class
- 2 – 3/4 Multi-age classes
- 3 – 5/6 Multi-age classes

The major changes, as you will notice, are the addition of a 2/3 class and the removal of a 3/4 class. Enrolment is the single most important factor in determining the number and make up of our classes. We have seen a small decline in the early years numbers over the past few years. This has forced us to organize the classes in different ways. We made this most recent change in order to keep class sizes limited to about 20. Most educational research shows that class size and the composition of classes are the two most important factors that affect the learning environment in a classroom. We have addressed both of these issues through our continued implementation of multi-age classes.

2. On September 15th and 16th of 2008 Strong Beginnings will take place. Strong Beginnings refers to an assessment that occurs early in September. It includes observation and assessment practices both in the classroom and on an individual basis. Strong Beginnings has a **Kindergarten to Grade 6** focus and its aim is to enhance beginning of the year classroom assessment with all children. A couple of weeks into the school year, two days are chosen during which children attend school **by appointment** for approximately 60 minutes to participate in assessment activities. The appointments on these days replace regular classes. This is an opportunity for teachers to extend and consolidate their understanding of each child in order to plan for instruction that will effectively address unique learning needs as early as possible in the new school year. **There will be no regular classes on these two days.**

The opportunity for individual or small group meetings with our students will allow us to get to know them better both as learners and individuals. While the Strong Beginnings process will allow us to gather information about each student's achievement in Language Arts, and Mathematics, we know that we will also learn many things about each student's learning style. The information we gather will serve to enhance our understanding of each child. It will allow us to plan for each student in a way that builds on strengths and promotes academic growth.

More information about this assessment and scheduling will be coming later this year and in the fall.

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3. Morris School is a multi-age school from grades 1-8. This model was adopted in 2003 in order to create equity in class sizes and also, more importantly, to be able to compose classes that are equitable according to student need and classroom dynamics. This model has been proven to be very successful in the past years and we hope to continue to see the benefits of this process as a school.

In late May early June we will begin to meet as a group to discuss class placements for the 2008-2009 school year. The composition of the classes is done by teachers, in consultation with the school administration. Class placements will be indicated on the final report card in June. As per past practice, parents may request a class placement for their child. Requests are looked at on an individual basis and **may** be accommodated **when possible**. An example of such an accommodation is a child having siblings or close relatives in the same class. Requests must be submitted to me, in writing, by May 16, 2008.

Another important part of the multi-age process is the two year looping of students. This allows teachers to have a student in their classroom for two consecutive years. There are many positive effects of the looping process and it is something that we feel is a crucial part of the children's success in a multi age environment. The relationships between student and teacher, as well as teacher and parent are usually stronger. The level of comfort of the student in the class is increased. The children often become leaders and mentors themselves by the second year. There are many other positive effects that foster a more positive learning environment. As a rule, students do not change teachers during this two year loop, with the exception of very special circumstances.

4. At the end of June, **all report cards will be mailed home during the last week of school**. Students will not be given their reports to take home, as has been done in the past.

5. As part of our commitment to offering the best possible programming to our children, we have decided to reintroduce Basic French to all students in Grades 1-4 in 2008-2009. Our plan is to extend this to Grades 5 and 6 in 2009-2010. This will complete our implementation of French to Morris School in Grades 1 through 12.

If you have any questions comments or concerns about these or any other issues please feel free to contact me at any time by email at dskog@rrvsd.ca or by phone at 746-2612 ext. 223.

Yours truly,

Darren Skog
Principal
Morris School