From the President
Shawna Russell

Welcome to October! Hopefully, the new school year jitters are behind you and your family has settled into your fall routine. We had a great start to the Falls Church Elementary PTA year with successful events like the Kindergarten Coffee and the Info Fair. But before we close the books on September, I especially want to thank Celaine Bruno, Bonnie Games, and all of the volunteers and donors who made the Fall Social a huge success. And an even bigger thank you to Curt and Monti Board for hosting the event in their beautiful backyard! It was a fun night full of great people and yummy food and drink.

The FCEPTA will keep up the momentum in October. I want to encourage everyone to come out for our first Restaurant Night of the year. It is being held October 4 at pie-tanza in Falls Church. You can dine in or take out and pie-tanza will donate 15% of the proceeds to our schools' libraries. It’s a great way to support a favorite local business and our kids' schools at the same time. Just remember to bring in the flyer that went home in backpacks. If you need another copy for yourself or a friend, there is one available at the end of this newsletter. pie-tanza will also accept the flyer via smartphone: just pull up the form on our website at http://www.fallschurchpta.org/PieTanza%2010-4-12%20v2.pdf.

We continue our library fundraising with the TJ Book Fair, which will be held October 15-19, with evening sales on October 16 and 17. Books for all ages and reading levels will be on sale. And while you are at the Book Fair, be sure to attend the PTA meeting on October 17 in the TJ Cafeteria. October is National Bullying Prevention Month and we will welcome to our meeting local expert Lara Doyle, LCSW. Lara will present her workshop entitled “Let’s Talk About Bullying: An Interactive Workshop for Parents and Children.” Please RSVP to fallschurchelempta@gmail.com with number of children attending and ages.

The newly formed FCEPTA Special Education Committee will be holding their first meeting on October 25 at 7pm in the TJ library. Elizabeth Germer, Director of Special Education and Student Services, will give an overview about Special Ed services offered, as well as field your questions about the process used in identifying students and what parents need to know about how to get started in the system. Everyone is welcome to this informative session.

This is just a small sampling of what is happening in October. Please be sure to check the website for a complete list of events that includes Picture Days, Principal’s Coffees, and many more.

Finally, I want to remind each and every one of you to get involved in our PTA. Our schools depend on a strong and active PTA and we need your help to make this year a success. Even if you don’t have any time to volunteer please consider completing and returning a Membership form.

Thanks for everyone’s support and have a wonderful October!
Joan’s Mail Bag
Joan Wodiska, School Board Liaison

Whether at the Farmer’s Market, Cherry Hill Park, or the lunch room, there are a few questions that I’ve consistently heard this fall from parents and students. Throughout the year, I’ll use this column to answer those questions.

**Question: What's going on with the TJ Construction?**

Construction: Construction at Thomas Jefferson is well underway. We’re adding 14 classrooms and one science lab, and expanding “common space,” such as the lunch room to accommodate all those young learners. In total, the new addition will create an additional 22,000 square feet of instructional space. Please also note the playground is fully accessible, and will remain that way throughout the year. Children do have a slightly different path to the playground, exiting over by the gym, and a Children’s Safety Officer was added this year to ensure additional supervision during recess. I am so proud that the School Board was able to secure a zero-interest loan to help finance part of this construction project. If you see a member of the City Council or Planning Commission, please say “thank you” for supporting the TJ construction.

**Question: What was the enrollment growth in the elementary schools?**

Enrollment: At Mount Daniel the excitement is all about student enrollment! This year Mount Daniel saw the largest growth in the district, with a 9% increase in student enrollment. As a whole, FCCPS grew by 4.5% this year. We welcome many new families to both TJ and MD. It’s a great compliment to our district that parents continue to move here for our world-class public schools. Rest assured, the School Board is working hard to project and track enrollment growth. We planned ahead and built into the budget funds to add additional staff. As a result, we are delighted that additional staff was added in Kindergarten and First Grade to accommodate our rapidly growing population.

**Question: What is this debate about “technology” between the School Board and City Council? How did this end? What can I expect?**

Technology: Over the summer the School Board worked tirelessly with the City Council to obtain a portion of the surplus revenue to fund school needs. The School Board supported a split of the surplus between city taxpayers, the schools, and the city. After much debate, City Council Members Dave Synder, Ron Peppe, Dave Tarter, and Phil Duncan supported the School Board’s request for $500,000 to upgrade technology in our schools. I’m deeply grateful for their strong support of our schools. With their support, the Board placed an order for technology which will greatly enhance access for our elementary students. At Mount Daniel, a large quantity of iPads will arrive sometime in October and will allow our students to have access to the most current applications that assist in literacy and numeracy development. At Thomas Jefferson, a blend of iPads and laptops will arrive. Laptops are essential for Thomas Jefferson to prepare for the math assessments that launched this past year. The assessments contain “Technology Enhanced Items” which our children must be prepared to tackle now and well into the future. Both TJ and MD staffs are also excited about the collaborative projects and communication that can be enhanced with the new technology.

In closing, thank YOU for being such strong supporters of our schools and School Board. Our schools couldn’t have won the “technology” debate without your assistance. Our schools couldn’t have secured a zero-interest bond that is saving our city millions, without your support. So, thank YOU! The School Board will keep pushing forward. You inspire us to work even harder. Thank you for having our backs.

Have a question? Curious about something? I’ll answer your questions again next month. Please send an email to jwodiska@fccps.org.

Special Ed at FCCPS: An Overview
Thursday, October 25    TJ Library at 7 p.m.

Elizabeth Germer, Director of Special Education and Student Services, will give a presentation about services offered, as well as field your questions about the process used in identifying students and what parents need to know about how to get started in the system.
What Makes the PYP Unique?
Dawn Schroeder, Mount Daniel PYP Coordinator

The Primary Years Programme (PYP) and other International Baccalaureate (IB) programs are different from the traditional teaching methods that many of us experienced growing up. PYP requires a shift in the classroom from teacher-centered, fact-based lessons emphasizing independent memorization to student-centered, concept-based learning engagements with a variety of groupings. As we continue to develop in our implementation of the PYP, here are some of the things that you can see in our classrooms.

Engaging, Hands-on, Minds-on Learning

You just don’t read it, but you actually do it in person…
You just get out there and actually do it. You’re not just seeing with your eyes you’re actually seeing it in person and doing it yourself.

The above quote was taken from a student at Northern Heights Elementary School as they progressed during their authorization period (full video link is referenced below.) For me as a PYP educator, this is the driving force for planning—giving students as many hands-on activities and interactions with the real thing or real life scenarios as possible. If you think about your own learning experiences, you probably still remember those lessons where you actually got to do the things you were learning about (Driver’s Ed, for example). The most memorable lessons for me were chemistry labs in high school as I was finally able to see the concepts we were studying in action.

Student-Centered, Inquiry Based Classrooms

If you are new to the inquiry approach, you might walk by a classroom and think, “Wow, that class is out of control! Students are speaking loudly with each other and moving around their tables—how can any learning be going on?” If you take a closer look, you might see students working together to investigate a foreign object, sort things into groups that they understand, or negotiate until a consensus is reached about the meaning of a work of art. One of the PYP essential elements is skills that include Thinking, Research, Communication, Social, and Self-Management. These skills are fostered when students are allowed to work in a variety of group situations, consider others ideas, and construct meanings that consider multiple perspectives. Ideally students are given the opportunity to assess themselves as a member of a group and reflect on skills they can improve next time.

Another change you might see is the décor of the classroom. Look for products of the various student activities including evidence of their individual and group products.

Global Connections

IB was originally designed to give internationally mobile students a universal curriculum that could carry with them as they moved to new places. Part of the IB mission is to foster international-minded citizens of the world. They believe that through an IB education, they can help create a better world. International-mindedness is encouraged through the values inherent in the learner profile. In each classroom we can see the learner profile attributes predominantly displayed and referenced within our Units of Inquiry as well as encouraged on a daily basis.

As opposed to an international curriculum focusing on flags, food, festivals, fashion, and famous people, we will see relevant global perspectives and issues incorporated into the units.

The PYP program is unique in its combination of hands-on, inquiry-based learning with a global perspective. Although it can take time to get all aspects of the program in place, it is fulfilling to see the effects with heightened student engagement and students figuring things out on their own. There will be days when the students are so involved in inquiry that they will not want to leave school!

Reference


Reflections

This year we regretfully will not be participating in the National PTA Reflections program due to low participation in our schools in recent years. For more information, please contact Shawna Russell. We hope to resume this program in the next school year.

October Principal’s Coffees

Come chat with Mr. Palermo and Mrs. Halayko at their Principal’s Coffees.

TJ, Tuesday, October 16, 9 am
MD, Tuesday, October 31, 9:30 am
News from Mount Daniel
Kathy Halayko, Principal

The new school year is off to an exciting and enthusiastic beginning at Mount Daniel. The annual Welcome Back Assembly on September 26 was highlighted by a variety of new songs sung by preschool, kindergarten, and first grade children. A few old favorites like “At Mount Daniel” and “Danny is a Friend to All” led by music teacher, Carolyn Sweterlitsch, were especially fun for the children to sing. The entire staff was introduced to the students, and we talked about assembly manners as we anticipate many outstanding assemblies throughout the year provided by the PTA.

We hope you will enjoy visiting your child’s classroom on Back to School Night on Thursday, October 4. The teachers plan to showcase their daily schedules with PowerPoint presentations of your children in their classroom routines as they explore the academic program and share special experiences throughout the building. Specialists will greet parents in the hallways of Mount Daniel during an Open House beginning at 6:45 p.m. Look for them standing near their names and positions on our walls! As in past years, we are grateful to Saint James School for permitting us to use their school parking lot. Thanks also to the Falls Church City Public School Department of Transportation for the shuttle bus service to and from Mount Daniel, which will begin at 6:15 p.m. and end at 9:00 p.m. We always hope this brief snapshot of the school day and curriculum at Mount Daniel is helpful and fun.

All classrooms will participate in Jumpstart’s Read for the Record on October 4. Read for the Record is a national reading campaign designed to encourage hundreds of thousands of children and adults to read the same book on the same day. Follow-up activities will be provided to the classroom teachers through www.jstart.org and the Virginia Department of Education. The story that will be read this year is Ladybug Girl and the Jump Squad by David Soma and Jacky Davis.

The first Mount Daniel Principal’s Coffee of the new school year will be held on Wednesday, October 31 at 9:30 a.m. in the Library. Our topics will include volunteering at Mount Daniel and Cooperative Discipline. The latter topic will be facilitated by Jed Frei, our counselor. He is looking forward to meeting as many parents as can attend. During coffee, our conversations take many turns and we welcome your participation. Topics throughout the year will vary at the Principal’s Coffees, and we encourage you to suggest any program you might find interesting. Refreshments are provided by the PTA Hospitality Committee and are much appreciated. Hope to see you on October 31!

Please mark your calendars for another very special Family Discovery Series event: Science in the Night Sky on November 8 at 6:30 p.m. We have invited a guest astronomer to share her enthusiasm and fascination with the constellations, the Moon, Jupiter and Uranus. We will have several telescopes available for the children and families to view the night sky from the Mount Daniel school yard. Staff members will read to children under the stars, play Night Sky Bingo, and have a number of craft projects to enjoy. Watch for more information and an invitation in your child’s Danny folder. Bring the whole family to this exciting event.

As we begin the new school year, it is important for you to send a written note to the teacher placed in the Danny Folder and another to the day care program if any change occurs at dismissal including early dismissals, changes in transportation, any necessary trips, and/or changes in day care arrangements. The classroom will copy your permission notes and give them to the bus driver and/or daycare staff on the day of the change as well. Notes directly to daycare are also encouraged. Last minute changes to transportation after 1:00 p.m. cannot be honored by the office unless there is an emergency. We receive numerous requests for changes in transportation in order to accommodate play dates. We ask that play dates be scheduled after your child is safely at home. In case of child care needs or an emergency, we request that both families involved in the change forward a note to the teacher or office confirming the transportation change. We appreciate your support in helping us to provide the safest environment for your children.

Finally, the staff sends a special thank you to the PTA for seeking teacher Wish Lists again this year. These are small, but important items that make the classroom run very smoothly. We all appreciate your generous support.

Mount Daniel Lunch and Playground Volunteers Needed!

Mount Daniel needs volunteers during recess and lunch, whether it’s once a week, once a month, or whenever you have time. Visit our handy SignUp Genius calendar to sign up.

Thanks to the following parents who have helped the kids with their lunches and kept the playground safe: Lillian Aviles, Susan Baker, Linda Barnett, Carolyn Bruce, Stephanie Calabrese, Susan Janec, Janine Kraft, Karen McGunagle, Kristen & Patrick Reitmeyer, and Katrina Wagner

Also, thanks to the parents who have pitched in to help, even if they hadn’t signed up to volunteer!
News from TJ
Bob Palermo, Principal

Students have been able to enjoy the early fall weather with outdoor recess most days as they roam between the play equipment and the field. Swinging, climbing, soccer, and kickball all draw participants.

Routines are being built in classrooms to promote good citizenship and good learning habits. Reviewing how to select a Just Right book and reinforcing the TIGER rules are some of the activities to help set the important foundation for success at school.

Last week we held our annual Primary Years Programme kick-off assembly. Familiar book characters were introduced and received awards for exemplifying the PYP Learner Profile traits. Stellaluna was again recognized for being open-minded, and Harry Potter was identified as principled. You may wish to see how many of the traits and the representative characters your TJ Tiger is able to recall.

Each grade level is investigating their first PYP planner: second grade is looking into Communities, third grade is thinking about Government, and fourth grade is considering geographic regions. All grades are also using the new math series Think Math.

For safety we ask that you continue to follow the announced traffic patterns for arrival and dismissal. The details are on the school website. I am not sure if the beautiful weather, traffic pattern changes, or new demographics are the causes, but we seem to have a greater number of adults waiting for walkers at dismissal time. If you’re picking up your TJ tiger(s), please wait on the grass next to the Oak Street sidewalk or the grass next to the walkway between the gym and the sidewalk. This will facilitate the loading of the buses and leave a clear path for others trying to pass on the sidewalk and walkway.

We realize that the sidewalk, walkway, and bus pick-up is not well suited to the size of our school, but we want to keep dismissal as safe and as smooth as possible.

Back to School Night was very well attended, and we look forward to building on that home school partnership.

October 15–19 is TJ Book Fair time

The TJ Book Fair is a great place to add to your home library, start your holiday shopping, or stock up for winter reading. Bookworm Plantation will again offer hundreds of reasonably priced books and small gift items for sale. The best part is that your purchases help the TJ library!

Be sure to look at and purchase from the teacher “Wish Lists.” These are books for each classroom that are hand picked by each individual teacher. Your purchases for the Teacher Wish Lists are 100% tax deductible (personal purchases are 25% tax deductible). This is a wonderful opportunity to enrich our children’s lives with some great books while enhancing the classroom libraries. Look for the Wish List Board in the library during the Book Fair.

Watch for the “Volunteer Request” flyer coming home soon! Please sign up even if you can only help out for 30 minutes—every bit helps. This event is not possible without all of the parent volunteers. Many, many thanks in advance.

Book Fair Schedule—Week of October 15

Monday and Tuesday: Children view the books during school and prepare wish lists that are sent home.

Tuesday and Wednesday Evenings: Convenient evening buy times. Also a great time to look at Teacher “Wish Lists” and purchase books for your child’s classroom library, 5:30–8:30 p.m.

Wednesday and Thursday Daytime: Children may purchase books from parent-approved wish lists during open buy times.

Friday: Make up Buy Day, 8:45–9:45 a.m.

Mount Daniel families are welcome (and encouraged) to come to the TJ Book Fair! The selection of books will include many that are appropriate for grades K–1.

If you have any questions, or if you would like to volunteer (volunteers are key to our success), please contact: Lisa Young (twogooddogs@cox.net) or Debbie Schantz-Hiscott (dshiscott@verizon.net).

As always, all profits from the Book Fair will be used to purchase new library materials.

We look forward to seeing you at the TJ Book Fair!

TJ Playground Volunteers
Thanks for escorting the kids to recess during the first week of school: Suzanna Bowie, Mechelle Coppock, Anne Craig, Saleena & Shaun Dakin, Oscar Icabalcerta, Terri Nelson, Kelly Poort, April & John Rollins, Savita Sabharwal, Mary Frances Shaw, Sheila Wannamaker, Rohini Winters, Charlie Wood, and Lisa Young.
We are pleased to announce that once again we will be running the Original Works Program at Mount Daniel and Thomas Jefferson.

Through the Original Works program, each child will have the opportunity to have their very own artwork reproduced onto a variety of high quality products. The products range from magnets, mugs and mouse pads to ceramic tiles, t-shirts, note cards, and nearly two dozen other products. This year there are some new ones, so be sure to check out the flyer when it comes home!

Each child is eligible to participate in this wonderful program. Children are creating their “Original Works” during art class and, once completed, parents and children will have the opportunity to select which product or products they would like to feature their artwork. The program is designed to encourage creativity and student self-esteem. The resulting products make unique gifts that are practical for any season or occasion.

Complete details on the program will be sent home with art work and order forms the week of October 26th and are due back no later than November 5th. Delivery of the products will be in late November or early December—just in time for the holidays! For more information on Original Works please visit their website at www.originalworks.com.

If you have any questions please contact Monti Board at montiboard@verizon.net.

**Staff Wish Lists**

Below are lists from many of the teachers at Mount Daniel and TJ of things that would be helpful for the classrooms. The teachers and students would really appreciate it if you can donate any of these things for their classrooms.

Jackie Harper, 1st grade, Room 9
Fine Line Markers
Old kids magazines
Post-It notes

TJ Technology Team
Antibacterial wipes
Hand sanitizer
Tissues

Laura Dixon, 2nd grade
Disinfecting Wipes
LEGOs

Kelly Landers, 2nd grade
AA batteries for the Listening Center CD players

Emilia Hosier, 4th grade
Colored cardstock for making flash cards and math games
Kids DVDs for indoor recess

Lauren Lauer, 4th grade
AA and AAA batteries
Board games for indoor recess

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**“Let’s Talk About Bullying … An Interactive Workshop for Parents and Children**

**Wednesday, October 17 at 7 p.m. in the TJ cafeteria**

**Registration is required**

Effective parent-child communication can help prevent bullying and work out solutions when bullying does occur. At this unique workshop where your child is encouraged to attend, Laura A. Doyle, LCSW, will describe how to facilitate conversations about bullying and outline the signs to look out for if your child is being bullied … or is exhibiting bullying behavior him/herself.

RSVP: So our speaker may appropriately customize her presentation to this FCEPTA audience, RSVP to fallschurchelempta@gmail.com with the number of adults and children in your family attending, as well as the age(s) of your children. Note: This event will include a short PTA business meeting.
Support Our Schools with Box Tops for Education!

Mount Daniel and TJ are both participating in the Box Tops for Education program, and we need your help!

1) Every time you see the Box Tops logo on grocery products, please clip them out and send them in to your kid’s school via their backpacks. The PTA will collect them and turn them in for cash, which we can then use to support student programs. It’s that easy!

(If you have the time, there are two additional ways to make our lives a little easier: Trim the Box Tops with scissors, and make sure the Box Tops you’re sending in haven’t expired.)

2) You can also help us earn money by shopping online at many of your favorite stores through the Box Tops website! Stores include Ann Taylor, 1-800-flowers, Athleta, Apple, Best Buy, GAP, Crate & Barrel, DSW, Groupon, iTunes, Nike, Old Navy, Shutterfly, and many more!

More information about this great fundraiser and many others that benefit our schools can be found on the Fundraising page of our PTA website.

The Pirates! Band of Misfits

Friday, October 19th
Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School Cafetorium
Door opens: 6:00pm
Movie starts: 6:30pm
Pizza, popcorn, cookies, and drinks for sale

Enjoy a night with members of your PTA elementary community watching the recently released movie The Pirates, Band of Misfits.

Accompanied by his ragtag crew, an enthusiastic pirate captain sails the high seas and dreams of besting his bitter rivals.

Dr. Toni Jones and Richard Kane for coming to speak at the September PTA meeting

Shaun Dakin for creating our new Tech Guide for Room Parents.

Jennifer Cohn for organizing the pie-tanza restaurant night.

Mary Beth MacKinnon for another great Info Fair.

Amy Trombo and Heidi Lang for getting the kids excited about Odyssey of the Mind

Bridget Janicki for getting the room parents ready for a great year.

Kim Maller and Tom Clinton for organizing the ice cream scoopers and topping distributors. We had another successful ice cream social thanks to several amazing volunteers! We owe a big thank you to: Karima Azzouz, Erin and Keith Bartlett, Laura Taddeucci Downs, Oscar Icabalceta, Gregory Macris, Ginger Moore, Helen Snyder, Melissa Teates, Stacey Vagoun, Erica Voorhees, Tim Winters, Kim Zywicki, and many FCCPS students. We can’t thank you enough for helping with this popular event. We hope to see you at the Spring Ice Cream Social!

Thursday Oct. 4th
Pie-tanza Falls Church
“Give Back” Day
15% of your guest check
donated to
Falls Church Elementary PTA
To benefit Elementary School Libraries
Lunch, Dinner, Dine-In or Carry-Out Included!
(Must print & hand in this flier at time of purchase or present Smartphone.)
Call for Carryout  703.237.0977
Falls Plaza Shopping Center
(same side as Giant, next to Starbucks)
1216 West Broad Street
Falls Church, VA  22046