

August 2008

Dear Junior School Families,

I hope this letter finds you enjoying a slightly less frenetic schedule than during the school year and connections with those you love. I don't know about you, but I am sitting at my desk today and wondering where the summer has gone; it has flown by! Somehow it seems that the older I get, the faster summer flies by. I guess that's simply a fact of life!

While the school may seem quiet during the summer, I assure you that there is much work going on that is important in the life of our school. Our maintenance crew is working to clean, paint, and polish the school. Our maintenance and technology staff members are working hard to install SmartBoards in several classrooms. Our office staff has been hard at work updating information, revising our Junior School Handbook, checking in supplies, greeting visitors, and going about the summer procedures that serve us well when we begin our new school year at the end of this month. In addition to this normal summer work, the entire outside of the school has been repainted, as well as several classrooms. We have had new tile installed in the kindergarten rooms and new carpet in the admission office, mailroom, and several classrooms and hallways. The drainage problems on the big field and on the primary playground will be fixed, and a new walkway will be created from the main building to our pre-kindergarten. I thank everyone here who has worked so hard to prepare for the return of the children and the entire Junior School community in late August.

I continue to be impressed with the dedication and care faculty members take on behalf of the Junior School's children and families. Many of them have been at school working with colleagues, putting away new materials and supplies, and planning for the upcoming year. Others are working at home to prepare for new and exciting lessons to come. Almost every day there is someone here working; who said teachers don't work in the summer? There are very few schools where teachers work voluntarily during the summer to prepare for the upcoming year. I am pleased and proud to say that our faculty members care enough to do that for your children; our faculty is our strength.

Schools can (and do) get "stale" without change; they can spend years on "automatic pilot" and that is easy to do when nothing changes. Change at the Junior School this year means the addition of new students, an additional pre-kindergarten teacher, a new kindergarten teacher, the reassignment of Jennifer Riscili to kindergarten, and a new addition to our After-School Discovery Program. They will assure us that "life goes on" and schools can regroup and go on with new people, new energy, new ideas, and new eyes. It is helpful for all of us to look at what we do through "new eyes," and we will ask our new faculty to help us do that.

I would like to introduce you to the newest members of our Junior School community:

Tiffanee Peterson will join Melanie Claus Dorn and Carolyn Mericle (along with an intern to be hired) in our PK program during the 2007-08 school year. Tiffanee was a substitute at the Junior School during the 2007-08 school year. She has a B.A. degree in Spanish from Texas A&M, as well as a bilingual generalist early childhood certificate. She has three years experience teaching kindergarten in Texas. She also has studied abroad in Puebla, Mexico.

Karen DiFiore is Kim Disbrow's full year sabbatical replacement in 2008-2009. Karen spent last year subbing at the Junior School; this job included a long term position while Kim Disbrow was out on medical leave. Karen has a B.S. in Health and Physical Education from the University of Pittsburgh and 14 years experience teaching health and physical education.

Jamie Gassner will join Marilyn Martens in kindergarten this year due to the resignation in mid-July of Kerrene Killino. Miss Killino relocated to be closer to family. Jamie has a B.A. from Saint Norbert College and also her early elementary and social studies certifications. She has been teaching in Wisconsin for the last two years. Jamie and her husband recently moved to Pittsburgh because of a job relocation; her husband is an intern at UPMC.

Robert Madden joins us in our After-School Discovery program for 2008-2009. Robert had been working three days in the program, but now will be working five days a week. Robert has a Master's degree in counseling psychology from LaSalle University and a B.A. degree in elementary education from American University.

Summer is a time for rest, relaxation and occasions to be with family and friends. It is also a time for parents with children in schools to receive, fill out and return forms that are needed in order to begin the new school year. **Please fill out and return all enclosed forms by August 15, 2008.** We also must have a completed *Health Form* on file so that your child can participate fully in our school program. They will not be allowed to participate in physical education or recess unless we have this completed health form!

Enclosed is a name card to be used in the carpool line to help facilitate a "speedier delivery" of your child (ren). **Please use a rubber band to attach it to your sun visor.** This **really does** help facilitate a speedier carpool line, so please use it as directed. If you will lower the visor as you come by the platform, the teachers on duty will not need to ask you the name of the child you are picking up. If you need another card, please ask one of our office staff members and they will make you another one.

Also enclosed with this letter is a yellow packet of new and/or updated information from our Junior School Handbook. I realize that you don't have time to re-read the handbook every August; thus, I will include the updates/changes every summer for your perusal. Please take time to read this information and share the appropriate sections with your children.

We will continue to hold our before-school care program from 7:30-8:00 a.m. daily, staffed by Mary Aiken, library assistant. There is no charge for this program. Our After-School Discovery program begins on Thursday, August 28, 2008; special classes begin the week of September 8, 2008. There is a separate charge for this program, and there are options available to sign up for various classes. Information will soon be available at www.shadysideacademy.org.

Before the summer ends, I hope you and your family will embrace the opportunity to "get away" from your normal schedule/routine and do something enjoyable. We all need some "down time" and fun together as families. It is an honor and a privilege for me to be at the Junior School serving as the Head of School. As I look forward to my fifth year as Head of School, I anticipate an exciting and productive year together. Please do not hesitate to call me if you should ever have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Cheryl L. Little
Head of the Junior School

Enclosures