

Pearl River School District



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Peggy Lynch
Principal

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Welcome back, Evans Park; it is very nice to have you and your children return to school. As we begin the 2017-2018 school year, focused as always, on the Pearl River district mission, *Every Pearl River student can and will learn*, we are mindful of the critical role that our staff and parents play each and every day to ensure that children are learning, safe and happy.

At the start of this new school year, we will carry on our focus on *21st Century Skills*, particularly what we call the 4 Cs, *Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration and Communication*. Teachers will continue to explore ideas for remodeling lessons and learning spaces to provide challenges and strategies for creative problem solving and critical thinking. FLEx periods, rich with time for students to read, write, research, use technology and interact with peers, are highlighted by opportunities for intervention and independence. As we work to assist our students to reason effectively, make decisions, solve authentic problems or essential questions and work creatively with others, we are also studying *Growth Mindset*, the belief that, with practice, perseverance and effort, people have limitless potential to learn and grow, rather than a fixed amount of intelligence and ability. The goal is to help students understand and view their learning through that growth mindset lens.

As you know, our Maker Space provides students and teachers with learning and “making” opportunities; we will expand on what we began in that new environment last year. In addition, to address Next Generation Science Standards, kindergarten, first and second grades will be using a new resource, *STEMscopes*, developed to effectively connect disciplinary core ideas, science and engineering practices, and crosscutting connections. It is inquiry-based with digital and print resources and hands-on explorations. We expect to move to *STEMscopes* for third and fourth grades next year.

This year we have two remodeled classrooms, the first of many, we imagine. Charged with researching and developing a plan for a twenty first century classroom, Ms. Crisci and Ms. Bender set out not only to change furnishings in their rooms, but to plan and provide instruction in a

manner that would enable students with a variety of learning styles to reach their full potential. In addition, they will be participating in a workshop series with Sue Wheeler, Deputy Superintendent, at the Tri State Consortium in the coming months. Their work will be based on the book, *Bold Moves for Schools, How We Create Remarkable Learning Environments*, and keeping us apprised of new learning, including which aspects of the remodeled rooms and instructional strategies work best and what new ideas they might have. We'll be looking for new teacher pioneers to do their research and planning for future projects as well.

Our work based on PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) is again in full swing; staff members are helping students develop a clear understanding of what we call expectations, not rules, for every area of the school. I was delighted to note that, when I met with each grade level in the first week, the children remembered and articulated many of those; they were also happy to tell me about their new classroom environments. In the near future, we will have a schoolwide meeting and plan for our work together to achieve a positive and caring culture throughout our building. In addition, we will bring back acknowledgments of appropriate bus ridership, meeting with drivers to prepare for their ability to acknowledge their student riders for following expectations, especially respecting one another and being mindful of safety. We can look at this work related to PBIS as additional Cs in our 21st century line up, character and citizenship. We are a community and, as such, need to foster working together in a respectful, responsible, ready and safe manner. Please join us in using this language and promoting a pro-social culture that makes us all proud to be members of the Evans Park community.

Finally, kudos to our parents who are bringing children to school in the morning and following our traffic flow and expectations for drop-off. We rely on your cooperation for the safety of all the children and are pleased that you understand and are succeeding in ensuring that. Thank you, all Evans Park families, for sending your children in prepared and ready to approach each school day positively. Let's make this a banner year for each of them.

Sincerely,

Peggy Lynch

