

June 2, 2018

Dear McKinley families,

As I pause to reflect back on the 2017-18 school year, my first year as Principal of McKinley, I realize what an amazing journey we've been through together! We implemented many exciting new things at McKinley this year:

- ❖ We added theater instruction for all students to give them an opportunity to be creative and express themselves.
- ❖ We added monthly outdoor assemblies so we could come together as a community and reinforce our Pillars of Character and PRIDE philosophy. We started doing Friday Morning Announcements to share information, reinforce school rules, and give students an opportunity to collaborate with the Principal in leading broadcasts.
- ❖ We updated our schoolwide Positive Behavior Support/Discipline Plan, adding new "5 for Success" school rules. There was an increased emphasis on the positive reinforcement of Mac Slips, as well as a focus on social-emotional development during Morning Meetings (Responsive Classroom).
- ❖ Teachers learned about new instructional practices, Thinking Maps and Academic Discourse opportunities, and began to implement them schoolwide. For the first time classified staff was able to participate in trainings so they could support students and teachers in implementing these research-based practices. Also for the first time teacher leaders (a team of 12) came together as a Site Leadership Team (SLT) to analyze data and determine our school academic focus.
- ❖ We implemented a different model of Response to Intervention (RTI) that focused on core instruction in the classroom, with Tier III pull-out intervention in ELA for K-5 students provided by our two Reading Teachers and Literacy Language Interventionist. New this year, support was extended to K and 1st, and 5th grade received additional support in math. 100% of our Tier II and III students (80 students 1st-5th) were serviced, and 27% of them moved from Tier III to Tier II or exited.
- ❖ Teachers got more involved than ever, hosting and performing in the Talent Show, revamping Literacy Night into an interactive family experience, coming out to community events, leading Student Council, and eagerly participating in the Teacher Date raffles.
- ❖ A new student learning space was created, the Learning Annex, where small groups of students can work with teachers. This summer a wall will be removed to make the space even bigger so it can be used as a music and dance room as well.
- ❖ Thanks to PTA's collaboration with the school, we have increased the number of school assemblies from 4 last year to 13 this year. Assemblies ranged from folklorico dance to African drumming, recycling and conservation, actors acting out student stories, and classical music performances.

- ❖ Home school communication with parents was increased with a monthly newsletter, *The Lion's Roar*, and a twitter account @McKinleyLions. For the first time an Orientation/Info Fair with school and community groups was held on the first day of school. The Special Ed Resource Group for parents was created, and meetings were held monthly.
- ❖ The African American Support Group (AASG) was reinstated this year and became a thriving parent group. English Learner Advisory Council (ELAC) meetings consistently had the highest attendance of all parent meetings.
- ❖ PTA updated several events in a fresh and bold way. In particular Comedy Night got a hip lounge feel, making more money and having a higher turnout than ever before with 160 people. PTA reinvigorated volunteerism, and volunteers made Harvest Festival and International Day wonderful events for McKinley families.
- ❖ We had a Great Schools Forum, the first of such a forum to be held at McKinley with a sizeable turnout of faculty/staff, where parents and staff reflected together on data, strengths of the school, and how everyone can work together to make the school even better. At a Bagels with Benjamin presentation parents learned about our school site focus of Academic Discourse by watching videos of our students' learning in action.
- ❖ To increase school spirit and pride, our hilarious and fun mascot Mac the Lion was introduced along with new Spiritwear in our school colors.

I am extraordinarily proud of all that we have accomplished this school year. While it wasn't always easy, in the end the successes and achievements we have made together are quite impressive. I feel lucky that I came to a school that is so full of wonderful students, hardworking passionate teachers, and caring parents, who made it possible for McKinley to flourish so much this year. I thank each of you for all of your support. I look forward to 18-19 and know it is going to be another amazing year!

Sincerely,



Ashley Benjamin, Ed.D.
Principal