

August 2016

Dear Students (and Families),

I hope you are ready to have some serious fun this year! I know how excited I am about what we have planned. I think it is going to be bigger and better than what we did last year. I look forward to seeing familiar faces and new ones. By following the two simple expectations in our classroom—to **work hard** and to **be kind** we can make this an extra special year for everyone.

I hope you enjoyed many adventures this summer. I look forward to hearing your stories. I got to work on lots of building projects. Between watching many soccer games and dance performances I spent a lot of time at Home Depot. I also researched retirement communities for my dad to potentially move here from Florida. It is a very exciting possibility but also a lot of work. Last week I spent every day with Ms. Hoyer as we revisited every Montessori math lesson in the upper elementary album and planned out the year—at least in broad strokes.

This year Ms. Hoyer and I decided to purchase Classroom Supplies for all students in bulk. We think there are several advantages to this approach:

- By buying in bulk we save everyone lots of money
- We also save families the time and hassle of shopping at a busy time of the year
- Everyone will be sure to have all the tools they need to succeed
- We will be able to hit the ground running on the first day of school

One item that is not on the 4/5 Montessori Supply List is an independent reading book. We will have time dedicated to independent reading every day. I'd love to see you with a book on the first day of school so we can start good habits as soon as possible.

I will continue to create a culture based on respect and child-centered learning—one in which students feel safe enough to take risks. I strive to meet students where they are in their learning and to help create opportunities for them to build their own internal motivation. As a reflective and caring teacher, my greatest hope is that I will help students discover the tools they need to make informed and reasoned decisions in an ever changing and increasingly interdependent world—not just for themselves but for the good of their communities.

Dirk Vonderlage