

Edison Elementary – Back to School Night Principal Speech

August, 2011

Welcome to the 2011-2012 school year! I am Sally Whitelock, the principal here at Edison. Before I invite all of you, our community, into the school, I would like to take a few minutes to express my thoughts as we move into this new school year.

As we prepare for the year ahead, I am mindful of the importance of moving forward from the events of the previous year. While there was much to celebrate last year, and we applaud the hard work of teachers and the successes of students on so many fronts, I want to acknowledge that there were some significant challenges last year which put a lot of stress on our community. As the leader of this school, I am sincerely sorry that events unfolded as they did, and while the issues were complex and complicated, ultimately I must take responsibility for facing those challenges head on and for putting us on a new course this year. We began that process in June with a series of community forums designed to address these challenges. I would like to thank the Edison parent and teacher community who participated in those forums. I believe these forums are the first steps toward healing, and mark a critical transition to an important year ahead. Parent and teacher leaders, in collaboration with myself, Nadine, and Bill Fulton (the mediator), have begun to develop plans that address the issues that were raised. I would like to formally invite every parent and teacher within our community to attend our next two community forums. On Thursday, September 8 from 6:00-7:00 PM, our PTA is hosting a community forum to share the new communication plan for Edison. Then, on Saturday, September 24, Bill and I, with the support of a few parent and teacher leaders, will be facilitating a visioning process for the Edison community. Please join us in continuing to build relationships and trust while we solve problems and create the school we all want Edison to be. We must move away from the conflicts of the past that pitted adults within our school against one another and turn our attention to focus on the needs of our children. Please join us in this endeavor.

While it might take some time to see the signs of our work to build trust and a culture of collaboration, there are immediate signs of new growth and progress all around us. As you can see, we have a beautiful new field of grass and a designated baseball diamond. Please enjoy and encourage the rest of the community to use this outdoor space. There are also some improvements that were made in the Kindergarten wing which our teachers will be happy to show to you. Our facility staff and the district have worked very hard this summer to complete these improvements, please thank them when you see them. Lastly, we have a wonderful new school website, developed by a committed parent group, it is easy to navigate and filled with helpful content to find out the latest information about Edison. Please visit this site when you get a chance.

Another sign of momentum bringing us into this new year is the preparation the teachers have made to welcome your children into their classrooms for the year. The faculty has been back to school now for six days and have been collaboratively planning for engaging and challenging lessons for students. One of our goals as the professionals at Edison Elementary is to demonstrate the value of life-long learning by being learners ourselves. As part of this work, we have been learning about the new educator evaluation system, improving in our skills to teach writing, and developing science and social studies units with writing, technology and projects embedded within them. We are excited to begin the school year and share our lessons and instruction with our students.

We have an incredible teaching staff at Edison. Please give each teacher a warm welcome as they are introduced. Teachers, as I call your name, please come forward. I am proud to introduce:

Nadine Ritchotte, our Assistant Principal

Our ECE teacher: Lynn Brown

Our Kindergarten team: Mary Ball, Jessica Berard, Leigh Ann McSherry, and Jackie McSherry

Our 1st grade team: Allison Freeh, Emily Pitman, Cindy Stroschein, and Joan Wieser

Our 2nd grade team: Amanda Sandoval, Carol Reed, Michelle Strohfus, and Lala Wing

Our 3rd grade team: Floyd Baltz, Elizabeth Matthews, Jen Archibald and Jen Courtney-Keyse

Our 4th grade team: Trish Hardy, Jeff McCrea, and David Pines

Our 5th grade team: Robert Hudnall, Kali Garafoli, and Paul Roberts

Our educational specialists are: Kelsey Wales, Lesley Turner, Cindie Standlee, Jayne Saboro, Lauren Stewart, Elizabeth Vigil, Karin Adhern, Genero Mercado

Our psychologist is Margartia Cordero, and our nurse is Patti Nakata

Our specials team: Kelly Mansfield (Art), Robert Auday (PE/Dance), Rosemary Cano (Music), Gretchen Allgeier (Library)

Additionally, I would like to introduce several parent leaders who volunteer their time to help make Edison the great school that it is. Parents, as I say your name, please come forward so that the community can put a face to the name.

Our PTA leadership is: Julianne Sullivan (PTA President), Angie Guzdar (PTA Vice President/Fundraising Coordinator), Jen Ibanez (Secretary, Communications Coordinator), Bruce Meyer (Treasurer)

Our CSC parent members are: Mary Klute (Chairperson), Andy Schrant, Kristi Shevin, Ben Hann, and David Gesler

We have 2 wonderful and talented parents who have developed our new website which will be one of our major tools for communication at Edison. Matt and Lisa Meeks, thank you for your time, investment and support of our school.

Our Enrichment Coordinator is Michelle Kilen and this year, Lisa Meeks will be assisting her.

Our Green Team Coordinator is Melissa Knopper

Additionally – will members of our green team, fundraising committee, communications team, garden committee, please come forward.

There are many other parents and community members who volunteer in classrooms, donate to Edison and support students every day. You too ensure a quality education and positive school environment at Edison. If you volunteer at school and support the education of your students, please stand.

These are the wonderful parent volunteers who put in countless hours to assist with decision making, community events, volunteering opportunities, fundraising and supporting a positive school culture at Edison. I encourage all parents to become active participants at Edison either through the PTA, volunteering in the classroom or helping your students at home.

Teachers would you please take this time to go to your classrooms and prepare for your classroom presentations. Parents please remain for a few more minutes and I will speak for a moment about policies.

At Edison, our first priority is the safety of our students. Therefore, we would like to request your support in understanding our schedule and following safety rules of our school.

- Breakfast will begin at 8:00 in the cafeteria
- Supervision will begin at 8:30 on the playground, please do not leave children alone on the playground before 8:30 AM
- Students will begin school at 8:45 and will be tardy after 8:50
- Please drop off students at the playground or through the Kiss-and-go lane in the parking lot. Please do not drop off children across the street and have them run through traffic to get to the playground.
- All of the doors in the building will be locked at all times. If you are volunteering at the school or need to pick up your student, please buzz the front door and go to the office to sign-in as volunteer, or sign-in or out your student. Parents are ALWAYS welcome at Edison and we appreciate your support and understanding in helping us keep the school safe.
- For the safety of our students, all volunteers will need to complete the DPS volunteer paperwork at the main office prior to volunteers in any capacity at the school. If you completed this paperwork last year, you do NOT need to complete it again.

Communication is the lifeblood of a healthy school. We have sized up the needs of our community, and will be putting in place a comprehensive and collaborative communication plan to make sure everyone in our school community has the information they need to ensure our children thrive, our parents know how to best support them, and our teachers are able to work their magic in the classrooms. The first step of this process begins tonight. This evening in classrooms, teachers will have each parent complete a new communication form. Please be sure to complete these as accurately as possible and make sure we get these forms from you before you leave tonight--they are the building blocks for the entire system. Additionally, please check out our new website; contact me, Nadine, your child's teacher, the PTA president, or the CSC chair any time with thoughts, ideas, or concerns.

Please join us now, in the school building and classrooms, to learn more about your teacher and their plans for the school year. We will have 2 information sessions in each classroom to meet the needs of families with more than one child. These sessions will begin at 5:30 and at 6:00.

Nadine and I and our support staff will be hanging out in the hallways, please see us if you have any questions or comments.

Thank you for coming tonight. We are looking forward to a wonderful school year because we strongly believe that this year will be an important and exciting step forward for Edison. I am deeply committed to working with everyone to make it a truly extraordinary year for the school.