

## **Mill Hill Elementary School Open House**

September 14, 2016

7 PM

Good evening everyone and welcome to this this year's open house. Thank you for coming out tonight.

I'd like to introduce our professional staff to you at this time. I consider myself to be so fortunate to work among these people. They are people of the highest caliber and together we strive for nothing less than the very best for your children.

I expect that you will find tonight to be informative and welcoming. I'm sure you will hear about programs, curriculum, and expectations. I just want to give you a broad overview of a few key items.

I wanted to inform you that in partnering with the Fairfield Public Library in our incentive to read this summer, we more than doubled our amount of reading from last year. I cannot express enough how important it is for your children to live literacy rich lives, whether that means reading independently, being read to, or somewhere in-between. Additionally, your encouragement and support for education at home is so very important. It is so critical for us to be partners in your child's education. It is so very important to demonstrate your level of support for Mill Hill with your children and choose positivity at all times.

Tonight you will hear about Bridges, our new math resource. This is not a change in our inquiry-based math curriculum, but rather a resource that marries well to the goals of our curriculum and greatly supports the level of communication between school and home, an area that admittedly we were lacking in. There are other components of the resource that

add to our curriculum. Essentially, these components will aid teachers in developing student agency and encourage children to challenge their mathematical thinking.

And, yes, we do have state testing. While I understand that SBA testing is a measure that receives much public attention, it is just one measure. However, it is a measure that is comprehensive and rigorous and worthy of our attention. Yet, it is not something that we should quickly and easily draw conclusions from. Rather, we should use it as a very integral data point for such purposes as:

- provide feedback to students, staff, and parents
- inform instructional practices
- encourage reflection and adjustment for the whole school, grade levels, classrooms, and individual students

There is certainly plenty for me to talk to you about in terms of programs, initiatives, and curriculum and I could go on and on, but let's face it, all you're hearing right now is the teacher from the Peanuts. Wa, wa, wa wa wa. What I really want to convey is how I feel about this job and how these people feel about theirs. The other district administrators and I met over the summer and we had the pleasure of meeting our Interim Superintendent, Dr. Tracy. Then, most recently, I had the pleasure of meeting our newly appointed Superintendent, Dr. Jones. I need to let you all know that they both seem to be very genuine and caring educators who use the "F" word. No, not that "F" word! FUN! (you woke back up on that one) They emphasized the importance of having children love school, which is so refreshing. I love what I do, and I know these folks do as well. And I love that I am so fortunate to work here in this community that is so supportive of education. I take great pride in trying to create and sustain an environment that is safe, comfortable, and, yes, fun. If we can accomplish that, then our children will learn. They will feel free to take risks in their learning and grow as learners and human beings. Education is not just the common core; it is also the common good. Our lives are so busy and so scheduled these days and our world is

so full of anger and hate, that it's not enough to entrust your child's growth to us and to have us ignore key components of their social/emotional development and overall well-being. I can assure you that this school will always be a safe, warm, welcoming place to come and learn. Let's build on the honor of being named a National PTA School of Excellence and celebrate by continuing to support and encourage one another through all the successes and challenges. We all know that our children will be all the better for it if we do.

I don't want you to leave here thinking that we won't be challenging your children because we will. Instead, leave here tonight knowing how much we cherish them as well.

Thank you for coming out this evening.