

Principal's Column – September 11, 2012

It's been a busy start to the school year. As last week ended every class has finally gotten to meet all the special subject teachers in art, music and physical education. Our first visits to the library have started. Last year's test scores for students in grades 4 and 5 have been distributed and our start of school benchmark tests are just about done. We've had our first two fire drills of the year. And our first indoor recess day.

Much of the first two weeks of school is spent learning classroom and school routines. From PK to the 5th grade, each teacher, no matter what the subject and where the room is located, has policies and procedures for the classroom. How to line up to leave the room to go to art or music. What to do if your pencil breaks. How to let the teacher know you have to go to the bathroom. How to unpack in the morning and pack up in the afternoon. Where your lunch box and snack go. Folders, materials, toys for recess, workbooks. This week it looks like we may be dealing with jackets and sweaters as the weather has finally started to cool down a little. Some more procedures to learn.

We're pretty obsessive about these school housekeeping tasks at Lafayette. Much of the success of the school year will depend on how well students learn all of this at the beginning of the school year. What seem minor interruptions right now can turn into major ones in two months. You really can't have people sharpening pencils all day long. Practicing evacuating the building is a major safety requirement which is why we have fire drills every month of the school year. And as the school year progresses we will be having some review sessions. Right after winter break is always a time for review and revisiting. New students have to be taught what the expectations are. And sometimes what seemed like a great idea at the time needs to be completely rethought.

Reading, writing, and math have also been started. Second graders have started a plant unit in science. Third grade is starting multiplication with array patterns. Each day new centers are being introduced in PK and K. What we call academic learning has begun. But without learning school behaviors and practicing them until they are pretty perfect, developing a working classroom community is pretty much impossible. The life skills that will follow our students as they continue their education and finally begin a career. Because elementary school is filled with what on the surface seem like simple skills that it seems impossible that anyone actually taught them to you. But teach them we do. Each and everyday. So other kinds of learning can take place, too.