

Dear Lower School Parents,

I hope you and your children have been experiencing some of those lazy days of summer! We have been busy closing out the year and now turning our focus to the 2011-12 school year. We are already anticipating the students' return. Let me give you updates in several areas.

New faculty and staff:

We are pleased to announce the addition of two new full-time teachers, one part-time teacher and a new aide this year. None of these ladies are strangers to our school; all four are very excited about their new positions. I am delighted with each of these new hires and am confident that they will do an excellent job!

Mrs. Patricia Culp is our new 4th grade teacher. Mrs. Culp holds a BS degree in Elementary Education as well as an MA in Educational Leadership. Before coming to WA, she taught for seven years in 2nd and 5th grades. She has faithfully served the last three years as the 3rd grade and 4th-6th aide, as well as the substitute in 3rd while Mrs. Koenegstein was on maternity leave. She is the mom of two lower school students, Mark in 5th and Lauren in 2nd.

Mrs. Sarah Dormois will be replacing Mary Karen Dixon in 3rd-6th grade lower school science. Mrs. Dormois holds a post-bachelor's degree in physical therapy from Washington University School of Medicine. As a parent of three WA students, Allyson, class of 2009, Grace in 11th grade and Madeline, a senior next year, Mrs. Dormois has been very active in support of our science program, serving on ad hoc committees and advising and substituting for our science teachers. She has already done much planning and preparation for next year, building on the excellent foundation laid by Mrs. Dixon.

Mrs. Jennifer Thompson will be teaching 2nd grade science. She is a veteran kindergarten aide and recess supervisor. Her best kept secret is that she holds a BS in Medical Technology from Louisiana State University and is passionate about science. She is the mother of Ryan, class of 2010, Josh in 11th grade, Collin in 9th grade, and Jonathan in 7th grade.

Hassen Fakes, mom of Gibby in 5th and Edmond entering 3rd, did a great job substituting for Patricia Culp as 4th-6th grade aide last spring and has accepted the position for this next school year. Mrs. Fakes graduated from Auburn University with a BS in Family and Child Development.

Curriculum:

We had a challenging yet successful year with our new Singapore math curriculum. We will be adding *Math in Focus* in the fourth grade this year. Our teachers had further training in Singapore math last January and again in May. The 5th and 6th grade teachers will continue to supplement with Singapore math strategies. Teachers will have another day of training during

in-service as well as other math workshops that become available during the school year. It is also my goal to have several more parent training sessions this year so that you might better assist your children at home.

This year the 5th grade teachers will go back to the team teaching we did year before last. Mrs. Correll will be teaching math and Mrs. Hickman will teach spelling, grammar, and writing. This worked well before and the teachers are looking forward to teaching all the fifth graders in these specific areas.

On-going curriculum projects:

We have made some good progress on research regarding the progymnasmata (pre-rhetoric exercises) that we will be incorporating especially in 4th-6th grades. Miss Petzinger has been on a committee, along with Mr. Lockridge and Mr. Kay from the upper school, to research and better integrate this into our curriculum. Miss Petzinger had opportunity to teach a workshop on the progymnasmata at the ACCS Conference in Atlanta in June.

Teacher training:

Lower school teachers have attended various training opportunities this summer. Mrs. Hickman joined Miss Petzinger in attending the Association of Classical and Christian School Conference in Atlanta in June. Mrs. Dormois was joined by our new upper school science teacher, Mrs. Mary Read, in attending a 4-day seminar on teaching science Socratically.

Changes in the Consumable List:

After much consideration we have decided to make literature selections consumable. Many of our selections are no longer available in the editions we have on hand. It has been a monumental task each year keeping up with the books and repairing or replacing the damaged or lost ones. All our selections are relatively inexpensive paperbacks that will be great additions to your home library. On the enclosed consumable lists you will see additional charges by grade for literature selections. While we are always reticent to additional fees on the consumable list, the task of maintaining these books has become very impractical for the school. Now students will have the freedom to highlight or make notes in their books and the book will be theirs to keep. These selections will be kept in the teacher's classroom and handed out to students during the course of the year.

Clarification regarding policies:

Teacher requests:

Those of you who have been associated with Westminster for several years are aware that we have had only a spoken policy regarding requests for specific teachers. We have never solicited or necessarily honored parents' requests to have a specific teacher. There are many factors that go into making of class assignments and there is no practical way to honor every parent's preference in this matter. For that reason, we have decided to make a written policy concerning this which will come out in the Student/Parent Handbook included in the back of your Westminster School Directory. Please be sure to read this when you get your directory

and see me if you have any questions. I hope this will clarify the process and help you to understand what feedback is considered appropriate.

Dress code:

Overall dress code went well this year and students and parents rose to the occasion. We have found it necessary to make only minor changes in dress code policy this year. Please read it over carefully and note the changes. Thank you so much for your cooperation in this!

Carpool:

Please let me remind you that this is possibly the most dangerous part of our day. We are grateful for God's protection over these years, but we want to continue to be vigilant in holding to some strict practices here for safety's sake. Please reread these procedures carefully right before school starts and note any areas emphasized. We did well last year, but need to tighten up in a few of the indicated areas.

I have appreciated meeting with many of you this year, hearing positive feedback, personal concerns, and constructive criticism. Your honest input is invaluable as we continue to examine what we do and how we do it. Communication between parents, teachers, and administrators is of utmost importance as we work together to educate your children. My desire is to be available to discuss any issues that concern you. As many of you have discovered, it is best to make an appointment as I am often in the classroom or in other meetings.

I am grateful to God for His faithfulness and provision for a very successful year overall and, as always, to you parents as faithful supporters of our school. It is a privilege to partner with you as you raise your assignments from the Lord-- they are your heritage and reward! (Psalm 127:3). May God give continue to give us all grace and wisdom for the journey!

Soli Deo Gloria,

Debbie Frazier
Head of Lower School