



July 30, 2019

Dear First School Families,

I hope you are well and finding wonderful ways to squeeze the most out of the summer months. Whether your plans include staying close to home or finding adventures farther afield, summer is a terrific and important time to change routines and if possible, slow one's pace just a bit. The summer has gone by quickly and it is hard to believe we have just a few more weeks until the start of the new school year. I have been on campus through much of the summer and can share with you that the First School faculty and staff have been working hard to prepare for the 2019-2020 school year. We look forward to welcoming our five-day students on Monday, August 26 and the three-day students on Tuesday, August 27.

NEW FACULTY 2019-2020

We are pleased to welcome three new faculty members to the First School Community, each of whom are experienced professionals in early childhood education.

- **Sherie Coates - Pre-School Assistant** Sherie will work with Jackie Olson in the Pre-School program. She has significant experience working with young children in area learning centers. She has served as an assistant teacher and, most recently, a lead teacher in a pre-school-aged classroom at Creative Gardens Learning Center in Annapolis. She is a dedicated early childhood educator. In addition to her full-time position at Creative Gardens, Sherie is currently a student at Coppin State University in Baltimore where she will receive her B.S. in early childhood education in December 2019. We are fortunate to have her joining the First School this year.
- **Angela McKinley - Key-Wee Teacher** Angela will work with Meeghan Lewis in the Key-Wee classroom. She has a long professional history of working with young children in a variety of learning centers including Wee Lad & Lassie in Arnold and Kids' Farm in Davidsonville. Angela most recently was the lead teacher in a three-year-old classroom where she created lessons aimed at supporting the development of the whole child, effectively communicated with families, and actively engaged in the life of the school. She earned a B.A. in modern foreign language from James Madison University. We are thrilled to have Angela teach our youngest students and bring her valuable experiences to the First School.
- **Laura Meyer - Kindergarten Art** Laura served as a staff member for Key School's Lower School After School Program in 2018-2019 while also operating her own local art studio and business. In addition to her professional art, Laura has considerable experience developing and executing art curricula in area programs such as Balanced

Life Skills, Club SciKidz and Painted Uncorked. She earned a B. A. in art at Point Loma Nazarene University. Laura is eager to integrate the art program with classroom studies. We are glad to welcome her expertise and creativity to the First School.

In addition to the new faculty, there is one position change to officially recognize. Mary Mix, former Key-Wee teacher, will move to the Pre-Kindergarten program to partner with Danielle Kane. With new faculty and changing roles, here are the homeroom teaching teams for 2019-2020.

Key-Wee: Angela McKinley and Meeghan Lewis

Pre-School: Enita Moore and Roni James
Jackie Olson and Sherie Coates

Pre-Kindergarten: Mary Mix and Danielle Kane
Jeannette Seipp and Alice Lerner

Kindergarten: Vicki Bushmann and Ronnie Blackstone
Karin Walsh and Bethani DaGrossa

Summer Curriculum Development

- Vicki Bushmann and Karin Walsh spent several days reviewing the Kindergarten curriculum. One day they met with Jenifer Moore, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to reconsider the Native American and Tanzania units through the lens of culturally-responsive teaching. Another day was spent with Ellie Young, First and Lower School Math Coordinator to further refine and enhance the math program. A third day was focused on the materials and methodologies used to teach language arts.
- Kindergarten team Vicki Bushmann and Ronnie Blackstone, a newly minted team in 2018-2019 took time to reflect on their first year together and plan for the year ahead in terms of both curriculum and classroom organization.
- Jeannette Seipp and Mary Mix met several days throughout the summer to reflect on the long-established Pre-Kindergarten program and to plan for the year ahead in all areas of the curriculum and domains of child development. One day was spent with Ellie Young to discuss math curriculum scope and sequence, routines and manipulatives.
- The Pre-School team of Enita Moore, Jackie Olson, Roni James, and Sherie Coates along with Jenifer Moore, spent several days creating a new start of school year unit called "All About Me." The new unit highlights what makes each student unique and each family special and how differences among people are to be honored. The team is excited for this new unit to unfold early in the school year.

- Jackie Olson and Sherie Coates will work together in August to review the program curriculum and classroom materials, and discuss systems and routines.
- Angela McKinley and Meeghan Lewis will work together in August as they prepare for their first school year together. The pair will use their time to consider the curriculum, routines, critical components of the Key-Wee program, and classroom spaces/organization.
- Enita Moore organized a professional development morning through the Maryland Science Center called *Edible Education*. The trainers will come to the First School in mid-August to connect cooking and science in a hands-on workshop for teachers. Several First and Lower School teachers plan to participate.

Classroom Placement

Certainly one of the most commonly asked questions throughout the summer is when children will learn the name of their homeroom teachers. It is exciting for children and families to hear from their teachers before school begins. **Notes from teachers will be mailed from Key School on Monday, August 12.** If your child does not receive news by Friday, August 16, please contact the First School Office at 443.321.7865.

Start of School Conferences

Monday, August 19 and Tuesday, August 20 are set aside for parents to schedule 20-minute conferences with their child's homeroom teacher. These conferences are a great way to begin to forge the important partnership between home and school. On August 13, you will receive an email with a sign-up sheet through which you can schedule your conference time. If you are unavailable on the dates offered, your child's teacher is able to make alternate arrangements for this important initial meeting.

Start of School Orientation

All First School students are invited and encouraged to attend orientation on Friday, August 23 from 10:00-11:00 a.m. This is a great way for students to see their classroom space, meet their teachers, and connect with their classmates. There is an outdoor entrance to each classroom. First School staff will be available to guide you to your child's classroom. There will be many families on campus that morning, however please be sure to park in the main parking lot or along the Key School side of Hillsmere, Carroll or Mansion Drives.

Seesaw

This school year the First and Lower School Divisions are launching a new digital portfolio and communication tool called Seesaw. It will replace our former program, Haiku. We are looking forward to the many features and versatility that Seesaw has to offer and one of the best is that families are able to download the Seesaw Family app directly to their mobile devices so you are easily able to see new postings and messages from your child's teacher. We believe it will be a great window into the learning process and activities taking place in your child's classroom.

Later in August you will receive information about how to enroll to gain access. In the meantime, [click here](#) for a brief introduction to Seesaw.

Lunch Delivery

Nom-Nom, the lunch delivery service with whom Key School partnered last year, will not be providing lunches for the upcoming year. Members of the School's administration are looking for alternative providers and if a new partnership is established, we will let you know. In the meantime, families will need to provide a nut-free snack and lunch each day.

After School Play

Many children enjoy playing on the First School's outdoor playspace after dismissal. It is wonderful that they feel comfortable and a sense of ownership in the space and want to share that with their families. Please keep in mind that if your child plays on campus after school hours, they must be under the direct supervision of an adult and need to follow the safety guidelines that are followed during regular school hours. Additionally, our After School Program participants use the playspace beginning at 4:00 p.m. each afternoon and we ask that children not enrolled in that program vacate the space at that time to ensure the staff are able to adequately supervise the children.

Family Photo

In our building's main entryway there is a bulletin board on which we would love to hang a 4x6 photograph of your family. It is wonderful to see the full collection of families and nearly everyday I hear students making comments about the photos, looking for classmates and making thoughtful observations. I hope you will send in a photograph of your family so we are able to highlight each member of our First School community. You may send your photograph to school at the start of the year or you can email it to Bridgette Michaels, First School Administrative Assistant at bomichaels@keyschool.org.

Parent Portal

Located under the "Parents" link found on the top of the website's landing page, Key's [Parent Portal](#) comprises important resources you can refer to throughout the year, including all links in my letter below. First School specific information is found under the "Forms, Letters, Lists, & Resources" box.

Please be sure you have visited and completed the necessary forms on **Magnus Health**. It is found on the Parent Portal in one of the "big six" boxes. Each family needs to complete important medical information prior to the start of the school year. This is critical to ensure the School has the most up-to-date information about your child's health.

2019-2020 Student/Parent Handbook

The Key School Student/Parent Handbook is a great resource for information, policies and procedures. The most updated version of the Handbook will be available for your review in

early August. It is found on the Parent Portal. An important section to review outlines the arrival, dismissal and parking procedures. Here are a few important details:

- The First School day begins at 8:20 a.m. Arriving a few minutes before 8:20 allows your child to unpack, greet teachers and friends, and settle into morning routines. Teachers are ready to welcome students at 8:00 a.m.
- Dismissal is either 12:00 noon or 3:10 p.m. Teachers will open the outside classroom doors when they are ready to dismiss students.
- For children in Kindergarten through Grade 4, Before Care is available beginning at 7:30 a.m. Click on the link for more information or to register your child for Before Care.
<https://www.keyschool.org/parent-portal/extended-day-options>

Prior to the start of the school year I will send a message regarding the First School drop-off and pick-up procedures.

First School Policies and Procedures

In addition to Key School's Handbook, our Division has a document outlining specific procedures that will help you and your child as you transition into the school year. Read more about [First School Policies and Procedures](#).

As you consider the start of the new school year, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. While there are several more weeks of summer ahead, I am already looking forward to reconnecting with returning families and welcoming New to Key families in late August.

All the best,
Becky Feters
First School Division Head