

THE BERKELEY SCHOOL

November 4, 2009

Dear Families,

First of all, thank you for the heartfelt messages I have received from so many of you. I want you to know that I am still very much a part of daily life at TBS, even though you can't see me! I hope you can tell, by the photo in tomorrow's Newsnotes, that although I've been faithfully following my doctor's forceful advice to stay at home during the height of flu season, I'm actually doing well enough to surprise him with my energy. In fact, he agrees that the best medicine in the world, for me, will be to come back to work as soon as possible, because I get such great satisfaction from how it "feeds" me. I anticipate that I should be able to come back, at least part time if not more, after the December break.

However, I'm making the best of my current enforced solitude by taking time to rest, in preparation for my treatment plan, which is expected to begin next week. The type of chemo treatment that I will receive (for carcinoid cancer) is apparently far less harsh and with fewer side effects than what one typically experiences with the more common cancers. My prognosis is actually quite positive. And, my current symptoms should begin to abate as the chemo takes effect. So my doctors and I look on this as a very manageable, temporary situation; the only reason I can't physically be at work is because of the risk of catching H1N1 or a similar virus just as I begin chemo.

As you know, over these last few weeks I have been consulting and leading from the sidelines. The staff and I continue to meet via phone, conference calls, email, and some home visits. They have been wonderful at keeping me in the loop, soliciting ideas and feedback, and taking on more responsibility. The teachers have also kept me informed by sharing examples of children's work, their blogs, and so forth, and continue to ask me questions related to curriculum. Many of you have mentioned how well things are going along in my absence, which is actually the best compliment for the organization as a whole. TBS is in a good place, and that is reflected in the cohesive way this community has come together around this unexpected situation. Nevertheless, I'm anxious to return and get back to the more social part of my job, which I enjoy so much!

I am also spending time writing, a personal and professional goal I had set for myself this year which has been difficult to achieve, given all the daily, "in the now" responsibilities that go along with running a school. Now, with Zaq taking on more of the 'on-the-floor' business, I am able to focus more attention on written work that will be in our new website, our admissions materials, and marketing materials; questionnaires to parents about their satisfaction with this year's changes; and short pieces aimed at parents on topics such as our philosophy, curriculum, child and parent development issues, world issues as they relate to our children, and so on. Although I miss the daily interactions with all of you, I also appreciate that this time is an opportunity for me to focus on supporting TBS in other ways.

One of the pieces I am working on, which should appear in next week's Newsnotes, relates to describing our refreshed pedagogy in language that everyone can understand and appreciate, along with examples of classroom work and experiences.

So, going forward, you will hear regularly about my perspective on different topics. If there are specific areas you'd like to see addressed, please feel free to email your ideas to me at jstork@theberkeleyschool.org.

In the meantime, be well and know that I am thinking about all of you, albeit in the privacy of my home!

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janet Stork".

Janet Stork
Head of School
The Berkeley School