



June 3, 2010

Looking Ahead to 2010-2011

Dear K-8 families,

Last week, as students and teachers alike stared out the windows at cold, wet weather, it was easy to believe that we were in the midst of January, with a half-year left to go. However, it's June -- and as we look forward to a warmer summertime, we wanted to let you know about classroom configurations for the 2010-2011 school year.

The Berkeley School
t (510) 665-8800
f (510) 665-8700
info@theberkeleyschool.org
www.theberkeleyschool.org

Elementary/Middle School
and Main Office
1310 University Ave
Berkeley, CA 94702

Early Childhood Campus
2030 Francisco Street
Berkeley, CA 94709

At this time last year, we were looking at an upcoming school year full of unknowns. We had just changed the name of the school, we were preparing to debut new grade configurations at the K-3 levels, and many newly constituted teaching teams were being formed. Now, as teachers reflect on a year full of learning -- organizational and individual -- they are already planning for 2010-2011, a year into which we're heading with almost every K-8 faculty member returning to TBS. That stability ensures that we can look forward to a year informed by a wealth of professional experience, knowledge, and understanding, and we are confident that the benefits will be immediately, and consistently, apparent as the 2010-2011 school year gets underway.

In 2010-11, we are leveraging this "stable starting point" as a way to ensure that more explicitly structured faculty collaboration takes place -- both horizontally (among grade-level teaching teams) and vertically (among teachers at different grade levels). This kind of collaboration emerged at every level this year, and all teachers recognize the benefits that it confers -- for teachers, for the program, and, most important, for our students. While we are committed to preserving our multi-age K-5 classrooms, and ensuring that students reap the benefits of two-year relationships with teachers and peers, we also envision structures that ensure every child at a particular grade level will have some class time with all grade-level teachers, and peers, over the course of a year. Such collaborative structures strengthen students' sense of community and connection, ensure consistent instructional approaches, and allow teaching teams to design grade-level programs that can best fit the wide range of gifts and challenges that we see in our students. As an example, our K-1 teaching teams responded to a wide developmental range of readers in their classrooms by creating "book clubs" made up of students from both classrooms; consequently, on book club days, students experienced targeted instruction in an appropriate peer group, which only serves to support their growth and development. Teachers are excited about doing much more of that kind of work in the year to come.

At the K-1 level, TBS will be bidding farewell to Laurel Creek teacher Carrie Birgbauer, who helped guide our K-1 program through its first year of existence and contributed significantly to the school in ways that extend well beyond her classroom role. While we will miss Carrie, we are extremely fortunate to have another K-1 "pioneer" teacher, Lyssa Ichikawa, who is

ready and willing to step into the head teacher role in Laurel Creek for 2010-2011. Anyone who has seen Lyssa and Claire Patterson work together in Blackberry Creek this year knows what gifted teachers they are, and we are excited that their collaborative spirit and collective vision for vibrant, learning-centered education will infuse both K-1 classrooms next year.

Happily, Julia Marshall will reprise her role as Laurel Creek assistant teacher, while Kyla O'Neill, who has spent this year working with 4/5 students in Cerrito Creek, will move over to assist Claire in Blackberry Creek. In both classrooms, the combination of experience, energy, and deep developmental understanding of children will ensure that next year's K-1 program will continue to capitalize on students' love of learning while establishing a solid social, emotional, and academic foundation for future growth and development.

At the 2/3 level, we are fortunate to have both experienced teaching teams returning for 2010-2011. Danette Swan and Kate Klaire will continue to guide Sweet Briar Creek, while Nancy Nash and Mike Raven will head up Temescal Creek. All four teachers are already hard at work in thinking about lessons learned from this year's shift from three- to two-year classrooms, and are planning out summertime collaborations and curriculum development projects; all are excited about opportunities for collaboration among students and teachers alike in 2010-2011. If you have a child in 2/3 next year, she or he will have the opportunity to mix with students from the "other" classroom frequently -- in classroom settings, on larger-scale projects, and at other times -- and she or he will have contact with all four teachers, rather than only two, over the course of the year. Given the strengths and experience that these four teachers bring to their craft, we are confident that 2/3 students will continue to have a rich and compelling educational experience at TBS.

At the 4/5 level, Mike Sinclair (Cerrito Creek) and Jed Tukman (Strawberry Creek) will return to reprise this year's successful (and collaborative) teaching efforts that culminated in this week's Cerrito/Strawberry "Gold Rush Town" production. Although two important members of that collaboration are leaving (Tracy Siekierka will be graduating from the BATTI program -- congratulations, Tracy! -- and moving on to teaching opportunities elsewhere, and Kyla O'Neill will continue as a BATTI intern in Blackberry Creek), next year's 4/5 class sizes are significantly smaller, making it feasible for Jed and Mike, with their enormous collective experience, energy, and motivation, to work solo. As our 4/5 program is in its third year of existence, numerous collaborative structures are already in place (including the "Strawritto" fourth-grade math class and "Cerritoberry" fifth-grade math class), and a shared week at this summer's Project Zero Institute will undoubtedly enrich 4/5 students' experience even further in 2010-2011.

In the Middle School, we are happy to report that all faculty members will be returning for 2010-2011, although some roles will shift. In our stand-alone sixth-grade classroom (Wildcat Creek), Norman Johnson will continue to teach Humanities (Language Arts and Cultural Studies), to serve as an advisor, and to guide the sixth grade as a homeroom teacher. Sima Misra, who has partnered so effectively with Norman for the past two years, has chosen to scale back her hours next year, and will focus her 2010-2011 efforts on teaching seventh-grade math, running TBS math circles, and working on the accreditation steering committee. In her place in Wildcat Creek, we are extremely fortunate to welcome Marcella Anwandter, an experienced, energetic middle-school math and science teacher who joins us from New York, where she has spent the past three years teaching at Tompkins Square Middle School. As a candidate, Marcella was in demand at several Bay Area independent schools; ultimately,

it was TBS' commitment to professional development and progressive education that won her over. In addition to teaching sixth-grade math, advising, and serving as Norman's homeroom partner, Marcella will teach eighth-grade math. This will allow Chris Perdue, coming off a very successful first year at TBS, to focus his energy on teaching seventh- and eighth-grade science and serving as a 7/8 advisor; Chris is also eager to work with other teachers on integrating technology into instruction. Tanya Madrid-Campbell will return as our 6-8 Spanish teacher, a 7/8 advisor, and the coordinator of our eighth-grade Mexico trip; she will continue to pioneer creative integration of Project Zero principles in language instruction. Simon Hurd will reprise his role as 7/8 cultural studies teacher and advisor; with Sima's change in position, he will also take over sixth-grade science teaching duties, and will continue to be involved in our work with ecology, environmental science, and food on both campuses. 7/8 English teacher and advisor Emma Batten-Bowman, who stepped in for Liz Heck on short notice in April, returns for a full school year, poised to work with Norman in implementing a rigorous, writing-centered middle-school curriculum. And, of course, Craig Jackson will return to reprise his role as standout PE teacher for grades 4-8, as 7/8 advisor, and, coming off a year in which both the football and basketball teams competed for the league championship, as coach for all things athletic at TBS.

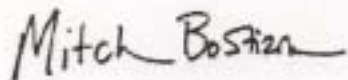
In our final classroom -- the art studio -- we are pleased that teaching artists Julianne Hughes and Benicia Hill will both return to reprise this year's extremely successful collaboration. Students at all levels benefited from these teachers' determination to ensure that art at TBS is far more than an activity -- it is a discipline that requires just as much thought, effort, and rigor as any conventional class -- and both teachers have important roles to play in making thinking at TBS more visible in the upcoming year.

At the end of this year, we will say goodbye to Linda Van De Wall -- with gratitude -- after 11 years of dedicated work in support of BMS and TBS students and in care of our library. However, learning support coordinator MaryBeth Ventura will return to work with students in grades 4-8. MaryBeth will also continue to oversee all our learning support services, which will be augmented by an ECC-3 learning specialist soon to come on board.

In the weeks to come, we'll be making a few more announcements about specialist positions, but we anticipate no major changes in our priorities in these important areas of our program.

Thanks for all you do in support of your children, and of the TBS community -- we're looking forward to a great 2010-2011.

Best,



Mitch Bostian
Head of School
mbostian@theberkeleyschool.org