

Director's Corner

April 2017

Dear Fraser Families,

I want to thank all of the families that responded to the 2016 Fraser Client/Consumer Survey. We had 77 families from Fraser School respond. More details of the survey are located later in this newsletter.

We have some exciting renovations coming to Fraser School this spring and summer. As some of you may have noticed, there has been painting and some construction in the front office and corporate end of the building. Later, the construction will move to the school end.

Each classroom, office, and all common spaces (e.g. hallways, the gym) will get new paint, new flooring, new cabinetry, etc. It is expected that each classroom should take about one week to complete. We are thinking that two classrooms will be closed at a time.

Because our enrollment is so high right now, we will need to create temporary classrooms in the gym during the renovations. I have contacted our DHS licensor to ensure that all licensing regulations will be maintained during construction. We plan to make the temporary classrooms a very fun "summer camp" environment, with a tent and other camping amenities. Each family will receive a letter stating the dates that their child will be at "summer camp" when we know more precise details. We hope to complete all work to the Fraser School end of the building by fall 2017.

I want to publicly thank the Edina Rotary Foundation for their recent generosity. The group donated \$2,700 for us to purchase a musical

instrument for the playground. In the original playground design, the gazebo was specified as a space for music and movement activities. The new musical instrument will be, hopefully, the first of a few new amenities to the area.

Even though it is just getting to be spring, we are already looking forward to our summer and fall programming at Fraser School. I am almost finished with the 2017-2018 calendar and am just waiting for information so that we can determine parent/teacher conferences and spring break in spring of 2018. We have also determined the tuition increase. We will have a minimal increase since we had the rate structure change in 2016. A letter and the new rate structure will be inserted into the tuition statements that will be mailed on or around April 10. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience.

Thanks for sharing your children with us,

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Fraser Walk for Autism Saturday, April 8 7:00 AM at Mall of America



Bring your family for a fun day and support your friends at Fraser!

This family-friendly event held at Mall of America on Saturday, April 8 at 7:00 am allows your family to support Fraser. The first floor is filled with games, face painting, hands-on activities, therapy animals and mascots.

Outings can be overwhelming. That's why the Fraser Walk for Autism is even more sensory-friendly this year. Visit our Sensory Stops at each corner of the mall with therapy activities. Take a break whenever you need it at our Calming Stations throughout the route. Look for our Sensory Support team in orange shirts who is there to help if your child is having a tough time.

Program Committee Meeting

Please join us on Monday, April 3 from 5:00-6:00 PM at the Program Committee Meeting. Each April, we gather to discuss Fraser School's developmental philosophy and written curriculum with parents and staff members. The meeting will be held in Conference Room 1 in the corporate end of the Fraser School building. Please let me know if you are able to attend.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Throughout the week of April 3-6, teachers will offer parent/teacher conferences with the families in their classrooms. The teachers are completing developmental assessments on each child and preparing a conference summary form based upon these assessments. During the conference, teachers will present the conference forms to the families and discuss their child's development. They have also been gathering each child's work throughout the school year and putting it into a portfolio. Teachers will take the opportunity to show parents this portfolio.

This is a great chance for parents to have uninterrupted time with their child's teachers. When parents pick up, it is often busy and there is not much time to have an in-depth conversation. Conferences provide an opportunity for parents to share any concerns or thoughts that they have about their child. Typically, conferences are scheduled for 20 minutes. If you think you will need longer than 20 minutes, please talk with your child's teacher to see if you can schedule a longer conference.

Typically, conference times also focus only on the child's developmental progress in the Fraser School classrooms. Teaching staff are not able to answer questions about a child's therapy or day treatment progress. If you would like to have other professional staff join the conference, please let your child's teacher know ahead of time. Depending upon the therapists' schedules, they may or may not be able to join at the time that you've already signed up for.

Finally, if none of the times that are offered work in your schedule, please talk with your child's teacher and see if you can arrange another time to meet.

Client/Consumer Survey Results

Overall, the ratings were very positive on the client/consumer surveys for 2016. Fraser School had 77 families respond. Here are the survey statements and the percentage of respondents that either agreed (4 rating) or strongly agreed (5 rating) with each statement:

- 1: "Overall, Fraser's programs met or exceeded my expectations." 84.6%
- 2: "I would recommend Fraser services to others." 88.8%
- 3: "I would return to Fraser in the future if I, or a family member, needed additional services." 87.4%
- 4: "Staff treated individuals with respect." 94.1%
- 5: "Staff demonstrated sensitivity to me/my family's diversity and culture." 92.7%
- 6: "Staff listened and responded appropriately to questions in a timely manner." 90.0%
- 7: "Staff made me aware of other Fraser services." 58.6%
- 8: "Fraser's services made a positive difference in my family member's skills and/or behaviors." 80.5%
- 9: "Overall, my family benefited from being connected to Fraser services." 90.2%

There was also space for families to leave comments after each statement and at the end of the survey. The comments could be summarized into several categories:

Communication – families overall want more communication from the classroom staff on a

regular basis. A couple families commented that they were disappointed that we were not using PreciouStatus more. We are having significant issues with the Wi-Fi in our building and this is going to be addressed during our upcoming renovations. We are hoping to get PreciouStatus up and running by the end of the summer in 2017. Families also wanted the communication about the tuition increases to come in a form other than the newsletter. A suggestion from the survey was to include a letter in the monthly tuition statement and so, this year, we are doing both methods of communication.

Staff turnover – families are concerned about the high rate of staff turnover. The turnover is not just difficult for the children and families but is also hard on the other staff at Fraser School. I know that a high quality environment is very dependent upon the quality of the teaching staff in the classroom. We are committed to hiring and retaining a high quality teaching staff and I am doing everything within my power to maintain that high quality.

Curriculum content – some families suggested adding "more" to our curriculum content (e.g. more kindergarten readiness, more alphabet learning in the toddler rooms, etc.) Our philosophy is play-based based upon decades of research into how young children learn best. All of our children are being introduced to academic concepts through both child-directed and teacher-directed activities. Because much of the learning occurs during an activity, it is more difficult for families to see the learning. We need to do a better job of documenting the learning that is happening on a daily basis in our classroom through photos and narratives. If you would like to learn more about our developmental philosophy and written curriculum, please join us at the Program Committee Meeting on Monday, April 3 from 5:00-6:00 PM in Conference Room 1.

This month's events

> **Program Committee Meeting**

April 3, 2017
5:00-6:00 PM

> **No School**

April 5-6, 2017
Parent/Teacher Conferences

> **No School**

April 7, 2017
Spring Break

> **Fraser Walk for Autism**

April 8, 2017
7:00-10:00 AM

Upcoming events

> **Family Fun Night**

May 18, 2017
6:30-7:30 PM

> **No School**

May 25-26, 2017
Staff Development Days

> **No School**

May 28, 2017
Memorial Day

> **No School**

July 4, 2017
Independence Day

Volunteers

One comment on the survey also mentioned that we have a variety of volunteers in the classroom and that the parents do not know the names or background of the volunteers. While this does not address that particular parents' curiosity of the names, I can tell a little about the volunteer program at Fraser School.

Fraser School employs a part-time Volunteer Coordinator, Carol Barthelemy, who works closely with the Volunteer and Intern Coordinator employed by Fraser Human Resources department. Volunteers apply online and go through two orientations. The first covers basic Fraser information and includes HIPAA and OSHA regulations. The second provides specific information for volunteering at Fraser School. We have a variety of volunteers but most fall into two categories:

- Community members that want to give back. We have many people in our community that want to volunteer because they have the time and desire. Some of those volunteers are retired teachers or grandparents that miss their own young grandchildren. Others are high school students that are experimenting with a possible career choice or trying to enhance their college applications.
- College students that are here for a school assignment. We have ongoing relationships with the several universities and community/technical colleges that send students here for observations or practicum hours. Most recently, Herzing College is sending nine occupational therapy assistant students that will volunteer each Friday from the end of March through sometime in May to gain experience with children of all abilities.