



BRENT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

August 1, 2019

Dear Brent Families,

Welcome to school year 2019-2020! This mailing serves as your orientation for the year and is intended to give you everything you need to enter the year feeling informed, inspired and ready.

This year we are projected to welcome 452 students across our 21 classrooms. They will be cared for by the 312 families that they represent and 67 faculty members who have been planning eagerly for their arrival. As has been the trend in recent years, Brent is growing. That growth is not just in enrollment numbers; we are growing our instructional practices, intentionality, relationships and dedication to our goals. We seek to be a community that recognizes and preserves our strengths while naming our weaknesses and tackling them with humility and resolve.

New programs and initiatives – like our recent introduction of Focus Teachers, Trimesters and the Atelier, and Responsive Recess – shape some school years. Reflection and revision will shape this year; sometimes pushing forward means giving things time to work, knowing that ambition is best reached with time and close attention. We will deepen our expertise within primarily existing structures, starting with the Operating Principles identified last year. Along with our Bear values of Bravery, Empathy, Activity and Responsibility, these Operating Principles guide our work and our aspirations. In a year of reflection and revision, though, we have altered a few points for clarity. These revisions (noted in *italics*) allow us to be consistent in our message while dynamic in our approach.

2019-2020 Operating Principles

We will serve our students through this set of operating principles inspired by our historic strategic plan, rooted in an analysis of our potential, and designed to guide our growth as a school community.

1. We will seek and leverage understanding about individual students in order to advance their learning.
2. We will employ instructional structures and strategies that emphasize depth of learning *in pursuit of individual student goals*.
3. We will enhance operational efficiency such that our physical space and systems are an enabling force for teaching and learning.
4. We will apply intentional and consistent social-emotional learning to all aspects of the school day.
5. We will provide *broad and inclusive* opportunities for collective planning, transparent communication, and *continued adult growth*.

These operating principles will act as our school goals, assigning our destination while allowing flexible and response routes for getting there. *We are and we are becoming.*

Our Faculty

We are proud to have 97% of our faculty return this year. Even in a year in which we can celebrate such high retention, we still have two farewells: Amy Harding-Wright (First Grade Focus Teacher) and Katie Ferguson (Administrative Assistant). After a decade at Brent and much reflection, Ms. Harding-Wright decided to return to her roots as an early childhood teacher and, in absence of a vacancy at Brent, joined the Miner Elementary Community. Ms. Ferguson will return to her hometown of Cleveland, Ohio to be

closer to family. Both will be missed for their incredible dedication and service. Megan Dunn will move from Fifth Grade Focus Teacher to the same role in first grade. Nancy Khuu is joining us as a Fifth Grade Focus Teacher and Instructional Coach. Though we are still finalizing the hiring process, we intend to fill the Administrative Assistant role internally.

Our students and families will return to familiar faces but just as we expect our students to change over the summer, so has our faculty. They have planned in teams, attended conferences, engaged in professional development, and designed the goals on which our work will be based. Our faculty members boast exceptional expertise and yet they show a great dedication to the professional growth that will impact our students.

Our Families

Whether chaperoning a field trip or leading the call for volunteers, our families are an integral part of our community, both supporting it and as partners in making it stronger. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA), Local School Advisory Team (LSAT), Diversity Working Group (DWG) and School Improvement Team (SIT) serve as formal representative groups and tackle challenges ranging from fundraising to curriculum and from inclusion to facility modernization. Though the mission and goals of these groups are further described elsewhere in this mailing, you can expect us to spend time considering our community's vision of parent engagement, the ways that we communicate as a school, how we expand the voices that we hear and respond to, and how we modernize our facility to reflect not just the practicalities of space but also our values and operating principles. We respect our obligation to inform you throughout the year and ask that you attend to this information as a starting point to offer your time, perspective and partnership.

Our Before Care and Aftercare Programs

With the departure of Springboard Education, our former before care and aftercare provider, came a clear opportunity to pursue a program that meets the needs of our students and families. In pursuing a match, we analyzed candidates through a rubric that included criteria for safety, student engagement, staffing models, rates/costs for families, access for all students, communication, and timeline for implementation. After several rounds of presentation and interviews with a faculty and parent panel, we selected Innovation Learning. While Innovation Learning earned optimal and superlative ratings on the rubric, perhaps what stood out most was their stance around responsiveness to individual school communities. Though they have over 70 sites across the country, they are committed to adapting their program to reflect what is unique to Brent; they do not see themselves as the perfect program but one that has a solid foundation and will be made better by our community's goals and feedback. Please see the included Innovation Learning flyer to learn more about the program and enrollment process.

We are eager to welcome our students new and returning in just a few weeks. As ready as we are and as many plans we have made, we also embrace the merit of listening and the chance to notice how we can grow. This summer mailing is the start of a yearlong conversation so whether it is through parent and student listening sessions, principal's coffees, PTA meetings or just a playground chat, we look forward to hearing your voice.

Until the day we begin.

Sincerely,

Norah Lycknell
Principal