A note from the Principal...

Conferences
Conferences were held on Wednesday, December 2 and Thursday, December 3. Thank you for taking your time to attend your child’s conference. We had a record turnout this year with more than 98% of our students represented. Your role, as a parent, in the education of your student is as important, if not more important, than that of their teacher. Open communication between home and the school is a vital component to the academic success of elementary students. Please don’t hesitate to contact your child’s teacher if you ever have questions or concerns.

Staffing Update
Our overall student count continues to rise. Currently we have 619 students (K-5) and when you add in the students in our preschool programs we have approximately 685 students total attending Briarwood. This is a high watermark for our school during my tenure. Additional students have resulted in some additional Educational Assistant (EA) hours. Please welcome the following new EAs to our Briarwood team: Kymberli Nelson and Tawnya Young.

Lower Parking Lot
Our lower parking lot is used exclusively for bus traffic for our preschool, ECEAP, and Head Start programs along with district deliveries. With the vast amount of vehicles using this area throughout the school day it is not a safe area to drop off or pick up students. Please use the designated drop off and pick up area in the main parking lot. The safety of our students is paramount. Thank you for your help and cooperation.

Emergency Procedures
Our school takes student safety seriously and we strive to improve our emergency procedures with monthly drills. We continue to make minor adjustments to our plans and procedures and we will continue to practice to ensure the safety of all students, staff, and parent volunteers. In the event of a true emergency an E-News message will be sent.

Assessment Season
It is that time of the school year when our students will begin to be assessed on their current knowledge in a variety of subject areas. Formal assessments will be given to provide valuable data on the current progress of your student. School personnel at the building and district level will use these results to measure student growth and to help narrow the focus of our instruction and program decisions.

Students and teachers have been preparing in the classroom for these assessments throughout the school year. The types of questions your student will encounter during these assessments will not be a new experience. Below is some valuable information with regard to the upcoming assessments.

Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)
The ITBS is the first standardized assessment of the 2015 – 16 school year. It is a norm referenced assessment that was recently adopted by our district. The ITBS replaces the Stanford 10 assessment. Results of the ITBS can be compared to student scores across the country. The elementary testing window for the ITBS is January 26 – 29.

A battery of multiple choice tests in the areas of reading and math will be given to students in grade 2 only. Classroom teachers will notify families of the specific assessments that will be given on each day of the testing window. Make up tests for absent students will be administered February 1 – 4.
**Holiday Season**

Enjoy your opportunity to be with family and friends over the holidays. It is a special time to be together and a perfect opportunity to stay connected. Although we won’t have school for a couple of weeks please help your child stay in touch with school. Read with your kids, tell them stories of when you were their age, and most importantly, have them do some independent reading. The sheer volume of reading, words read per year, is a crucial component to excellent reading skills and comprehension.

We have several upcoming school events scheduled and we hope to see you soon. Enjoy the season of “giving” with your family and friends and again…thanks for all you do for our school community.

Sincerely,

Drew Terry
Principal