



E-News September 11, 2009

New Year's Day...Sort of By David H. Feldman, Head of School

Since I was three years old I have lived on a school year calendar. I have measured my years by the grades I attended, the teachers that I came to know and the graduations that I watched from the aisles and the stage. For those of you who live in the world that is January to December, the life cycle that I describe may seem a bit out of the ordinary. Living in a world of September to June has a very different pacing and, as I have found, provides a very different perspective on life.

The academic year has its seasonal rhythm, but I must tell you that I find September to be an absolutely glorious time of the year. Teachers as a group are very optimistic and hopeful, and nowhere is that more evident than in the hallways of schools in the month of September. I can think of no other profession where the new year begins with each individual being given a fresh start, a clean slate, and a genuine opportunity to begin anew.

September is a time when children arrive at our doorsteps having physically grown, matured, and reinvented themselves during their three-month hiatus from the classroom. They have new experiences to share, new perspectives to guide their thinking, and new ways of approaching challenges. As teachers, we get to literally see children grow-up right before our eyes.

These ever changing young people are quite different from the students who left us in June. The names are the same, but little else resembles the small faces we said good-bye to last spring. We are witnesses to an amazing transformation, and as such, we bring with us a perspective that acknowledges the need for a fresh start, the opportunity to make new mistakes, and the chance to redefine ourselves. I'm guessing that few people on the January to December calendar feel that way about their jobs or co-workers when they come back from the New Year's holiday.

As we begin the new school year I encourage you to consider a new mindset. In her most recent research on how we learn, Stanford University Professor, Dr. Carol S. Dweck encouraged parents and teachers to help children form a growth oriented (vs. fixed) mindset. Dr. Dweck wrote that throughout our study of how people learn we too often focus on a number behind a test score, and with that number establish in our minds a notion that learning has boundaries and limits. This fixed notion often finds its way into the positive reinforcement we share with children. We often find ourselves telling children how smart we think they are or that they have a gift.

Dr. Dweck's research suggests that positive reinforcement that overemphasizes intellect or talent often boxes a child in and discourages him from taking risks or challenging himself to learn more difficult material. "Many people assume that superior intelligence or ability is a key to success. But more than three

decades of research show that an overemphasis on intellect or talent—and the implication that such traits are innate and fixed—leaves people vulnerable to failure, fearful of challenges and unmotivated to learn.”

Dweck suggests that the most helpful type of positive reinforcement comes from helping children build a “growth mindset.” The key to the growth mindset is to help children see the brain as a muscle that, when challenged, can grow. She shares a wonderful picture with her students of a brain standing on two feet in a gym lifting weights. The message to students is that learning is a workout for the brain, and hard work helps build the connections that make the brain stronger. Dr. Dweck says, “Parents and teachers can engender a growth mind-set in children by praising them for their effort or persistence (rather than for their intelligence), telling success stories that emphasize hard work and love of learning, and teaching them about the brain as a learning machine.”

We can help children develop a growth mindset by concentrating on the reinforcement we give them. Here are some examples:

- You did a good job drawing. I like the detail you added to the people’s faces.
- You really studied for your social studies test. You read the material over several times, outlined it and tested yourself on it. It really worked!
- I like the way you tried a lot of different strategies on that math problem until you finally got it.
- That was a hard English assignment, but you stuck with it until you got it done. You stayed at your desk and kept your concentration. That’s great!
- I like that you took on that challenging project for your science class. It will take a lot of work—doing the research, designing the apparatus, making the parts and building it. You are going to learn a lot of great things.

Parents and teachers can also teach children to enjoy the process of learning by expressing positive views of challenges, effort and mistakes. Here are examples of such communications:

- “Boy, this is hard—this is fun.”
- “Oh, sorry, that was too easy—no fun. Let’s do something more challenging that you can learn from.”
- “Let’s all talk about what we struggled with today and learned from. I’ll go first.”
- “Mistakes are so interesting. Here’s a wonderful mistake. Let’s see what we can learn from it.”

You can learn more about Dr. Dweck’s research by reading her recent article in *Scientific America* (http://www.isacs.org/misc_files/SciAm.Dweck.pdf), or you can read her book *Mindset: The Psychology of Success*.

With a new mindset, we complete the first week in our journey through the new school year. And since this is the educator’s New Year’s season, it’s a time to make some resolutions. I hope you will join me in resolving to make this a year filled with a growth mindset, one that provides each of us with the space to try new things, to stretch us, to have the chance to learn from our mistakes, and to immerse us in a genuine community of learners.

Website Tour: Lesson 1

Last spring we launched our new Website, this fall we will launch the second half of the site with the introduction of an Intranet section that will give community members access to Faculty, Classroom, Alumni, Parent Association and Board Web pages. This section of the site will be password protected and accessible only to members of the school community.

Before the Intranet portion goes live, I’d like to take some time and highlight various sections of our Internet

site. This week, I'd like to introduce you to the Academic Calendar.

<http://www.calendarwiz.com/calendars/calendar.php?crd=kazooschool&&jsenabled=1&winH=728>

Located under the Parent Information tab on the main page of our Website, the Academic Calendar lists all school events and holidays for the whole year. It's a part of our site that is updated daily, so it's a good site to bookmark and check frequently. For those of you who use iCal or RSS on your computer or smart phone, you can link to the Academic Calendar and receive regular updates as they get entered. Simply click Subscribe iCal/RSS on the calendar page at the very top just below the day's date.

We hope this calendar tool is something that will help families stay informed and connected with the activities taking place at school.

Parent Association News

By Elizabeth Lane Davies

We're getting back into the swing of school things. Hopefully you have your eyes open for ways to jump in and add your talents or skills to help the Kazoo School experience. The first step is to simply turn in your yellow Parent Volunteer Survey form at the "Back to School Night" next Monday, September 14th. You will see a Parent Association table where you can drop off your completed form and then get a cool treat for your entire family. (We'll have extra forms available if needed! If you are one of the folks who have already turned in your form to the office, we have your name so you'll get your treat.) Whether you can give an hour a month or only once a year, each parent/guardian or grandparent's involvement is appreciated.

One of our Parent Association (P.A.) goals for this year is to ensure that the linkage between parents and their volunteer interests at school get connected. This is actually more difficult in practice than in theory, but we have a team ready to ensure it happens so that everyone has the opportunity to pursue their interests in helping Kazoo School and their students. The completed surveys are the foundation of that plan.

Speaking of help, the Parent Association (P.A.) has several areas of immediate need. See if any of these fits your time, talents or interests:

WANTED: Brains & Brawn for Picnic Set up or Take Down on Monday, September 14th.

Have an extra 15 minutes to spare next Monday either before or after the "Back to School Night" event? 3 – 4 helpers are needed to organize and tidy up. Feel free to take only one part as any help is appreciated; contact Kristi Betts @ 345-3239.

The Parent Association (P.A.) needs 1-3 people to help with Kazoo School's catered-in lunch program. We hope to again provide catered lunch options for students four days each week starting by the end of September.

WANTED: Lunch Czar

We are seeking one person to help Phillip in the office organize the menu/options. This mainly involves being our liaison person with the restaurant. This could be mostly completed at home on your own schedule. This position needs to start IMMEDIATELY. Think of all the hungry little learners and their lunch-fatigued parents.... OK, so it's only the first week of lunch packing but we'll get there soon enough!

WANTED: Lunch Ladies (or Gentlemen)

We also need a couple of people (no gender preference) to help with distribution of the lunches at school at roughly 11:00 am for approximately 15 minutes. If you can help even one day a week, please contact Elizabeth Lane-Davies lanedavies2@mac.com or Phillip Heasley pheasley@kazooschool.org. Thanks!

WANTED: Unique Boutique Organizers

Kazoo School traditionally hosts a special craft fair in early December just in time for holiday gift giving. Our past long time organizer has retired, but is willing to mentor new leaders while using the already in place infrastructure. This task could be done primarily off site except for the day of the event in December. Time commitment: 2-4 hours per month September-November. Please contact Marie Lee at melee828@yahoo.com or Karen Anderson at aksummrfun@charter.net for more info.

We'll highlight more opportunities in the weeks to come or as they arise. Plan to attend the October 14th Parent Association meeting at 6:30 p.m. to learn more and get involved with your Parent Association. Feel free to contact any of your 2009-2010 Kazoo Parent Association Executive Team for any questions, concerns or more info.

Elizabeth Lane-Davies, President
Marie Lee, Vice President representing Preschool -2nd grades
Julie Cartier, Vice President representing 3rd-8th grades
Lani Kittredge, Secretary & Intranet guru
Phillip Heasley, Treasurer
Jamie Marshall, Faculty Liaison

Extended Day News

By Sonita Newbury-Schau

What an eventful week at Extended Day. The children have been kick boxing, building legos cooking baked apples, beginning French, writing newspaper articles, making comic books, and walking in the woods to collect seeds. All of this in four days.

Thank you to all who have volunteered to run Enrichment Classes! We are going to have a wonderful fall!

Chess Club: John Brady and Drew Schau will teach the fundamentals of chess. In recent studies there has been documented proof of an increased improvement in problem-solving skills, notable gains in self esteem, and improved sense of responsibility among children who participate in chess activities.

We have so many kids interested in Chess Club we need another instructor. Do you play chess? Please contact Sonita if you are interested in volunteering for Chess Club.

Lego Club: Marie Lee is hoping to find the Lego Master Builders among the Kazoo School community. Each week the children will work as a group to construct a Lego creation. As the children work together building, they learn communication, teamwork, and social skills.

Drama: Lindsay Kahman will help children explore the craft of acting through exercises, scene work and theatre games designed to develop performance skills and technique.

French Class: Cynthia Larson explores French culture (food, music, etc.) to create a context for beginning to speak, listen, read, and write in French.

Art: Aubrey Hardaway instructs in art, taking into account each child's specific level of interest, their personality and understanding, and their openness to new things (materials, techniques, etc.). She will not only teach students basic drawing and painting, but -- as importantly -- will cultivate their development of creative and artistic ways of thinking.

Cooking: Elane Feldman, Veronica Clare, and River Firth introduce children to the basics of cooking. The children will explore recipes highlighted in children's literature.

Kickboxing: Carrie Brankiewicz combines elements of boxing, martial arts, and aerobics to provide overall physical conditioning and toning.

School Newspaper: Michelle Polasek is looking for budding journalists. She will help the children write articles exploring Kazoo School life.

Science Friday: Sonita Newbury-Schau will share her love of science with children through hands-on science activities.

Before School Care is available for all Kazoo School families who drop their children off before 7:45a.m. We truly care about your child(ren)'s safety and do not want them roaming the school without supervision. The Before School Care program will provide children with a healthy snack and orange juice. Before School Care begins at 7:00a.m. and costs \$ 5.00 per child per day.

If you are interested in volunteering to teach an Enrichment Activity for the Extended Day Program, please contact Sonita Newbury-Schau (269-372-3730, 269-998-5825 or newburysl@gmail.com).

Reminders:

- Please turn in your enrollment packets to Kristi Betts at the office.
- Please join us for Kazoo School's 1st Girls Volleyball match at Kalamazoo Country Day Monday, September 21st at 4:00p.m.
- THE 15th ANNUAL KAZOO SCHOOL KLEINSTUCK WALK IS COMING!!!
WHEN: This Saturday, September 12th TIME: 12:00 – 3:00p.m.
- Flu Shots October 16th from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. (nasal mist not available)
- All are welcome to attend our weekly Friday assemblies (8:00 – 8:30a.m.). Stop by for drop-off and stick around to see the program, it's a great way for parents to meet.



Join Us For... Back to School Night!!!

Monday September 14th, 2009

Back to school night is an opportunity to meet your child's teacher(s) and learn about the program and the year ahead. Meetings will take place in your child's classroom.

5:00 to 5:30	Preschool	Hjordis Snider, Jamie Marshall and Sonita Newbury-Schau
	1 st and 2 nd	Rose Lannen
5:30 to 6:00	Kindergarten	Whitney Ihrman-Holmes, Hjordis Snider & Michelle Polasek
	1 st and 2 nd	Claire Milne
	3 rd and 4 th	Derek Strine
	Middle School	Janice Russo and Anne Lape

Special area teachers (Art, Music, Spanish and P.E.) will be available to meet families in the gym.

The potluck is an all school event to bring our community together for an evening of fun. It's a chance to meet new families, reconnect with old friends, and enjoy each other's company.

6:00	All School Potluck
Where:	Gather at the Flag Pole (if rain – in the gym)
Bring:	A hefty dish to pass, your own tableware and a blanket or lawn furniture to picnic. Lemonade and Water will be provided.

Remember to bring your completed Parent Volunteer Survey (yellow form) with you to the picnic. Trade it in at the Parent Association table for a sweet treat for your family. Extra forms are available on the table by the office or pick one up Monday night at the Parent Association table.