

**UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
FALK LABORATORY SCHOOL**

August 18, 2009

Dear Falk Parents:

Enclosed with this letter are a number of documents that will enable you to plan for the 2009-2010 school year. The most important of these is your Falk School calendar for the upcoming year. Keep the calendar in a convenient place as you will need to refer to it until the new School Directory has been completed. The hours of the school day will remain the same. Children who do not know their classroom assignment should go to the first floor bulletin board and locate their name on one of the class rosters that will be posted. Rosters will also be posted on the door of each classroom in the building and school personnel will be available to help new children and those who are not yet reading to find their rooms. Please note the **MODIFIED** schedule for the **FIRST TWO DAYS** of school. Also note there will be **NO AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM THE FIRST TWO DAYS.** If you have any questions, please call the school at 412-624-8020.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL:** On Tuesday, September 8, only sixth grade students should attend classes; seventh and eighth grade students will not attend school on this day. On Wednesday, September 9, seventh and eighth grade students should attend classes; sixth grade students will not attend school on this day.

**INTERMEDIATE:** On Tuesday, September 8, only third grade and fifth grade students should attend classes; fourth grade students will not attend school on this day. On Wednesday, September 9, only fourth grade students should attend classes and the third and fifth grade students will not attend school.

**PRIMARY:** On Tuesday, September 8, only First and Second Grade Group A and Kindergarten (A-M) students should attend classes; First and Second Grade Group B and Kindergarten (N-Z) students will not attend school on this day. On Wednesday, September 9, only First and Second Grade Group B and Kindergarten (N-Z); First and Second Grade Group A and Kindergarten (A-M) students will not attend school on this day.

**NOTE: A list with groupings and a letter from your child's homeroom teacher was mailed earlier in August.**

All children will attend school on Thursday, September 10, 2009. The purpose of the staggered schedule is to provide the children who are moving into new situations a comprehensive orientation at the beginning of the school year.

**PERSONNEL:** The parents of primary students will be interested in knowing that our primary team of Dr. Marian Vollmer, Ms. Jill Sarada, Ms. Diana Dimitrovski and Ms. Megan O'Brien are all returning. We have added additional faculty to the Primary Team. Mr. Enrico Nardini and Ms. Rebecca Wright will be teaching first grade. Ms. Nabilah Rahman will be serving in both the first and second grade classrooms. Ms. Jennifer Porter and Ms. Jennifer Selby will be joining Ms. Sarada and Ms. Dimitrovski in the kindergarten classrooms. We look forward to another exciting year of learning in the Primary. Early learning experiences are so important, and these teachers will provide the best for our students.

Parents of intermediate students will be pleased to know that Ms. Joanne Ridge, Ms. Jackie Metcalf, Ms. Lindsay O'Sullivan and Ms. Phyllis Scherrer will be joined by Ms. Autumn Dillaman who will be filling the vacancy created by Ms. Steiner's leaving. Ms. Wertz will continue to have a teaching role with the intermediate and the students will experience the same fine quality education that is the trademark of the past. Ms. Ashley Hellmann will be providing Spanish language instruction for both primary and intermediate students.

We are also happy to be able to report that Ms. Eileen Coughlin, Ms. Ellen Cass, Ms. Niki Gorecka, Mr. David Kramer, Mr. David Ross, and Mr. Greg Wittig will be returning to the middle school. Ms. Lacey Davis will be joining the Middle School Team as Spanish language instructor. Ms. Donna Priore will again serve as an Instructional Resource Assistant to the Middle School Team. We are sure that all our middle school students will be provided many challenging opportunities during the course of the year.

Humanities will continue to be an integral part of every child's day, and your children will participate in our very special subjects classes. Dr. Pam Armstrong is again preparing for art classes, Dr. Lee Ann Conover and Ms. Daryl Godfrey will continue to teach the music classes, Ms. Linda Herward will return as the library teacher and will be working with Ms. Laurie Williams who has assumed the second library position, Ms. Barb Bianco will provide technology instruction, Ms. Laura Hunt and Mr. Brent Lopick will provide physical education instruction for all Falk School students. Ms. Lonna Wilkinson will be working with all student levels with the Alexander Technique and Yoga and Ms. Maccarelli will be returning as the school counsellor, also working with all student levels.

The Intermediate Unit specialists, Ms. Debbie Carleton (reading) and Ms. Mary Maceikis (speech) will again be a part our instructional staff.

Ms. Tina Mattis, Ms. Kelly DeGroot and Ms. Cindy Mazzotti will continue to provide the same fine support to faculty and parents that they have in the past. They will be joined in the office by Ms. Edie Smith who is moving from the Dean's Office to assume her duties at Falk. Ms. Roberta Poziviak is our cafeteria manager. She will be assisted again by Ms. Anita Stoner. They will be joined by Ms. Kerry Macugoski. Ms. Susan Sholtis will return as our school nurse. Mr. Dave Kiehl and Mr. Bill Thomas will continue as our custodians. Mr. Doyle will return as Director of the After School Program and he will be assisted by Ms. Danielle Fox. The After School Program is discussed in a separate program flyer.

We anticipate another exciting, productive year at Falk School and expect that your children's many needs will be met by our faculty and staff.

## **MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING (M.A.T.) PROGRAM AT FALK SCHOOL**

The Master of Arts in Teaching program is for graduate interns who have been interviewed by the Falk School faculty. They are scheduled to have a full year practicum at Falk. These interns, from several educational institutions, have decided to pursue graduate study while gaining practical experience working with children prior to entering the job market. Many direct benefits to our children result from bringing this additional instructional delivery into our learning environment. Having added educational resources in the building contributes to our instructional flexibility and increases the amount of direct instructional time that is received by each student. Those who successfully complete the program are granted the Master of Arts in Teaching Degree, and upon application, a State of Pennsylvania Teaching Certificate.

Each intern is assigned to an instructional team for the entire school year. Most interns are assigned to one master teacher but a few may rotate among different master teachers on a scheduled basis. The interns teach groups of children and supervise many other activities. Every intern is under the direct supervision of a Falk School teacher. The Falk teacher is responsible for all of the instruction that is delivered in the classroom. Although appropriate initiatives by interns are encouraged, it is the teacher who orchestrates of the classroom activities. Just as Falk School provides highly individualized instruction for its children, we also employ an individualized teacher education model. Some interns may be ready to begin working with small groups immediately and others may not begin working directly with children until they have been in the school for a period of time. The Falk School faculty believes the MAT program is a significant benefit to the education of Falk School children.

The intern teacher assignments for the coming year are as follows:

<b>Level</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Intern</b>
<b>Primary</b>	Ms. Dimitrovski	Ms. Weiss
	Ms. O'Brien	Ms. Kaminsky
	Mr. Nardini	Ms. Shaw (student teacher)
	Ms. Rahman	None
	Ms. Sarada	Ms. Wolfe
	Dr. Vollmer	None
	Ms. Wright	Mr. Brown
	Ms. Hellman	Ms. Nedley
<b>Intermediate</b>	Ms. Dillaman	None
	Ms. Metcalf	Mr. Marchetti
	Ms. O'Sullivan	Ms. Sukenick
	Ms. Ridge	Ms. Paterson
	Ms. Scherrer	Ms. Showman
<b>Middle</b>	Ms. Cass	None
	Ms. Coughlin	Mr. Hengelbrok
	Ms. Davis	Ms. Gallagher
	Mr. Kramer	Ms. Hamilton
	Mr. Ross	Mr. Yalch
	Mr. Wittig	Mr. Cristello

Additional student teachers will be joining us during second semester.

## **ACHIEVEMENT TESTING**

For our achievement testing we use the TerraNova. This test is first given as a practice examination to acquaint students with the testing process in grades three and four. The test is given and assessed against national norms in grades five and seven. The results of the grade seven examinations are used by our feeder high schools to assist them in student placement. Results of these tests are shared with parents and used to assess program development and individual student progress.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

The Pittsburgh Board of Education will continue to transport the children of city residents who live more than one and one half miles from school, to and from school, throughout the 2009-2010 school year. This is also true for suburban school districts that bus children and are located within a ten mile radius of Falk School. The obligation to provide transportation is stipulated in Pennsylvania state law. This means that the Falk School office does not plan the bus routes nor schedule the pickup points for the children. This planning is done by the transportation offices of the respective school districts. Parents of city students are notified by the Board of Education of their route at least 2 weeks prior to the start of school. If you do not receive notification, contact Ms. Kelly DeGroot (412-624-8024). Parents of students who reside in the suburbs should be notified by the school district at least 2 weeks prior to the start of school. If you do not receive notification, contact Ms. Tina Mattis (412-624-8021).

## **AHERA MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Falk School and the Teacher's Center (Library) buildings must meet specific health and safety requirements with regards to asbestos materials at the school. To meet these requirements, the buildings are inspected twice a year and the management plan is updated every three years by the Environmental Health and Safety Department of the University of Pittsburgh. An updated copy of the management plan is kept in the Falk School office and is available for inspection by employees, students, or parents upon request as required by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the requirements of the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA), enacted in 1986.

## **PARENTAL CERTIFICATE REQUESTS**

Act 195 and Act 90 require every participating school to maintain, on file, certificates of requests from parents for all textbooks and instructional materials loaned to their children under these Acts.

## **CHILD SAFETY**

The safety of the children who attend Falk School is the primary obligation of the Falk School faculty and staff. Although it is accepted as a tacit agreement between the parent and the school, every generation of new parent(s) is properly concerned about the security of its children. The purpose of this section is to reassure every Falk School parent that the safety of his/her children will never be compromised.

### **Building Security**

Falk School has historically been a place where parents and visitors are welcome. Because our school population is small, parents, university students, and even occasional visitors are easily recognized. A visitation procedure requires **all visitors** to sign in at the office upon arrival. Visitor badges will be assigned to ensure proper identification during the visit. Badges should be returned to the office, and visitors must log out before leaving. Over the past few years we have established the pattern of locking the front door to the building soon after 9:00AM.

Children's movements to special subject areas (including music) and all playground activities are always supervised by an adult. After-school program activities are supervised by Falk School staff and responsible university work study students. These professionals follow the same prescribed safety practices every day.

During this time of ongoing construction, workers will be kept separate from students at all times. However, in spite of this separation, all workers present at our site must have passed the same background checks required of all of our faculty and staff. The procedures utilized at the beginning of the school year will be modified in March when the renovation of the current building is completed. Parents will be notified of those security changes at that time. Finally, although we have seldom had an occasion to require the services of the university police for an emergency situation, in those rare instances their response time has been between 3 and 5 minutes.

### **Fire**

In spite of the fact that the Falk School building is of stone construction and essentially fire-proof, our alarm system is connected to a nearby fire station and fire drills are routinely conducted. Our experience has been that the building is evacuated in less than 2 minutes.

### **Drivers and Traffic**

Because the safety of children is a responsibility that must be shared by all of the adults associated with the school, there are guidelines for adults who drop off or pick up children at Falk. Allequippa Street is presently a throughway as well as the only access to the VA Pittsburgh Health Care System. There are stop signs which help to control the speed of vehicles as they approach and pass the school, and there is **NO PARKING** on Allequippa at any time. Also be aware that pick-up and drop-off options have changed with the creation of our Bus Lane and the new Governor's Drive.

The school day will begin at 8:45 A.M. and the dismissal time will be 3:15. Classrooms will be open after 8:15 A.M. If students arrive earlier, they should report to an open homeroom.

At drop-off, busses arrive at staggered times and utilize the Bus Lane. Buses will always offload at the Bus Lane and people who drop off children in the morning should utilize the new Governor's Drive in front of the building. This area is reserved for carpool. Traffic should enter from the south and exit at the north. If you are walking your son or daughter into the building, please pull as close to the curb on the school side as possible. This will allow other traffic to drop off children in the left lane and exit the Drive. There is still a right turn only at the exit end of the Drive. No child should ever be let out of an automobile so that he/she has to cross Allequippa Street. Moreover, no one should ever leave a younger child in a parked car while escorting older children into the school.

If you are visiting the school during the day there are 36 spaces along Lower University Drive that are designated as Falk School Parking (UDA). You can also park in the Bus Lane between the hours of 9:00AM and 2:00PM. You may park in the right lane of the Governor's Drive during the day as well. Please keep the left lane open for through traffic.

At dismissal, because we are the first stop for most of the bus lines serving Falk School, busses will begin filling the bus lane by about 2:30 PM. Busses arriving after the bus lane is full will wait in the staging area along Lower University Drive. Children will be walked to the bus pull-off lane and loaded at that point. As busses pull away from the school, the busses parked along Lower University Drive will move up and take their place.

At dismissal time, parents should not arrive prior to 3:00PM. All bus students are dismissed first, and not until the final bus had departed do we begin staging carpool students. Parents should approach the carpool lane from the south, forming a single line next to the school side curb. The lane is wide enough to have two cars parked side-by-side; however, for safety reasons we will only load students from the right hand lane. It will take time to get everyone used to the new system and we thank you in advance for your patience.

## **Rules**

The Falk School day is governed by explicit rules of safety. We establish room-level rules, team-level rules, and school-wide rules. An example of a school-wide rule is that no student is permitted to cross Allequippa Street without an adult. It's a non-negotiable rule set by the Director. The faculty and staff have also established strategies to be employed in crisis situations. For the protection of your children, these procedures remain confidential.

## **Nurse**

Falk School employs a full time nurse to conduct vision, hearing and scoliosis screenings, track growth and development, maintain students' medical records, administer prescribed medication and care for minor injuries and illnesses which arise in our school.

## **VACATION**

Many of the faculty and staff will be on vacation during the month of August. However, the school office will be kept open all summer. If you need to communicate with the school, you can call into the office by dialling: 412-624-8020.

Sincerely,

Wendell R. McConnaha, PhD  
Director