

January, 2009

Dear Parents,

We have ushered in the New Year with great expectations and anticipation at Sligo Creek. We expect our children to continue to make great strides academically, emotionally and socially at a time when our resources continue to be limited. We are optimistic about our success even at a time when there is uncertainty about the reduction in positions within the county and the pressure regarding student performance from the State of Maryland. The pressure of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is felt in every classroom and in every corner of education. Many people believe that on January 20th, NCLB will be a mandate of the past.

It is my personal belief that regardless of what happens with No Child Left Behind, we will see little if any change in the way we do business in Montgomery County. As a system, we are extremely successful and have made impressive gains with all groups of children across the county. We are one of the largest school systems in the country and our children continue to out perform students in systems that have fewer ESOL children, less mobility and less poverty.

Dr. Weast is serious about not just “closing” the achievement gap, but he is adamant that race will not be a predictor of success in Montgomery County. Over the past several years, the achievement gap has continued to narrow with our students of color gaining ground. These gains in achievement are not just happen-chance. The performance of students in Montgomery County and Sligo Creek is a result of careful planning, focused intervention and a commitment to providing an excellent instructional program. We all know that students do not enter school with the same prior skills, background knowledge or resources at home. It is our job to determine the level of every child from kindergarten through fifth grade. The specific learning needs of students are identified and we set about to instruct each child in the areas of weakness. The task is monumental and time consuming. It takes time, energy and commitment to design an instructional program to meet the needs of three or four reading groups. It takes additional time to plan an instructional program to meet the various levels of students in a math class, with three or more skill groups. Teachers spend hours in careful planning to meet the needs of all children.

Our teachers are outstanding and their dedication is second to none. We feel blessed to work with a diverse population with the wealth of knowledge and experiences that diversity brings. We enter the new year with a renewed sense of purpose in our work and grateful that you are a part of our work. Expect great things from your children, as we do. May this year be filled with joy and peace for you and your family. Thank you for your commitment to us and to your children.

Sincerely,
Diantha R. Swift
Principal