



Dear Families,

Welcome to Kindergarten at Ann Arbor Open@Mack! I am very excited to meet your children, and to begin this vibrant and exhilarating new chapter in your lives with you. We are in room 263.

One of my main goals for your children this year is to nurture their natural love of learning. We will do this in a myriad of ways including exploration, problem solving and community building. We will work hard to maintain joy while growing in our understanding of how we are responsible in our learning, not only to ourselves, but also the good of the whole group; in our families, in our school community and the in greater community at large. This is truly going to be a year of amazing growth for your child and I am honored to share it with you.

Although the classroom may not be entirely ready, I will be at school from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 on Wednesday, August 29, 2018. Please feel free to stop by with your child to see the classroom and meet me.

On Tuesday September 4th, the first day of school, parents are invited to stay in the classroom with their child for the first hour if they wish, to ease the transition. Then parents can enjoy refreshments provided by the coordinating council in the media center.

When students arrive each day, they will wait outside the main door on the Brooks Street side of the building, wait outside the front door on the Red Oak Street side of the school, or wait *in the auditorium* until the bell rings at 8:14 AM. Students are invited into the classroom at the first morning bell. *We ask that students and parents are not in the hallways around the media center before the first bell.* The afternoon bell, signaling the end of our school day is at 3:22 p.m. When school is out, they will be walked to the bus, or to child care, or they will wait by our classroom door to be picked up.

Our back door in the classroom opens up to the parking lot off Brooks Street, near the bus loop. **When picking up, for safety, please make visual and verbal contact with me to let me know you are taking your child.** On the first day of school it is imperative that I have your *blue emergency card filled out*, and your child's end of the day (pick up) plans, before you leave. *Kindergarten* students must be picked up by an adult over the age of 18, this is a school district requirement. This means that Kindergarten students cannot be picked up by a sibling under the age of 18.

I wanted to take a moment to tell you a little bit about myself. For the past 26 years, I have been a teacher and an administrator. I have had the honor of teaching in a variety of educational settings, including teaching at a laboratory school at the University of Michigan and in an open school in a neighboring school district. The majority of my teaching and administrative duties have been in early childhood settings. Amidst this bevy of teaching positions, I have to say that working at Ann Arbor Open@Mack is where my heart is and I feel truly lucky to be part of the community here.

My loving family keeps me active on the weekends. We have four children aged 11-30. My daughters are 30, 13 and 11 and I have one son who is also 11 (yep... they are twins)! That said, I have provided you with my cell phone number in this letter. I am a mommy and I know that sometimes a weekend of worry can be cured with one five-minute phone conversation. I am best reached between 8:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. on weeknights if it is after school hours.

Below is my cellphone number; the messages you leave will be private. If I am unavailable, I do my best to phone you back within 24 hours. Texting is also *very convenient* for me and you will find that I can often text you back quite quickly. If I am sleeping, I will turn my phone sounds off, so please feel free to leave a late-night text should the need arise. If convenient, please send me an initial text (today) letting me know who you are, and who your child is, so that I might add you to my phone book.

We'd like to serve a shared snack each day in kindergarten, something simple like crackers, vegetables or fruit. Having a community snack helps the students feel more comfortable at school and is a valuable social learning experience. The snack is provided by parents. I will send a recommended list of snacks in a subsequent note. Usually each parent brings one snack for the entire class, once each month. I will send home a calendar with snack date assignments during the first week of school. **Please let me know right away about any food allergies so that we might make arrangements to keep all children safe. Until we know if we have any classroom food allergies, I would like to ask that all snacks are made up of fruits and vegetables for the first week of school.** If you can send in a fruit or veggie snack during the first week of school, please text me or call and let me know. Thank you!

Curriculum night is a very important meeting for parents in our class. Please try to attend if at all possible. It will be held on Thursday September 13, 2018. At that time, we can talk about the daily schedule, set up some volunteer times and talk about field trips. We also talk about Kindergarten curriculum. This is a meeting for parents alone. If you can volunteer for a block of time to be in the classroom, either morning or afternoon, every week, or every other week, please let me know **by signing up at curriculum night**. I will also be looking for one or two parents to coordinate emails, organize class celebrations & a separate person who can attend AAOC (Ann Arbor Open Coordinating Council) meetings. Being the AAOC representative for our classroom is a moderate job, and requires a person to go to at least one meeting monthly. The person will be responsible for sharing meeting minutes with the classroom parents and guardians. I will also need a few parents to help us in the locker rooms for Swimming class once each week. Finally, it is also important to note that there are some jobs that parents can do from home, such as cutting out projects or managing our Scholastic Book Orders.

It is a good idea for students to have a backpack or bag to carry things home. Kindergarten projects may be more easily carried in backpacks, or bags that zip or close. I also ask that students have a full change of clothes, including sox and underwear to store in the classroom. Please put them in something like a large, labeled Ziploc bag. We have a shelf in the bathroom for this purpose. In case of mud or other accidents, students prefer having their own clothes to change into. Kindergarten students will go to Swimming each week; your child will also need a bathing suit and towel weekly. Please don't forget to **label everything!**

Other important upcoming dates include:

- Back to School Picnic from 6:00 to 7:30 PM on Thursday, September 7, 2017 - Parents bring their own meals and their family and folks eat on a blanket or chairs on the school grounds.
- AAOC Meeting (like the PTA) from 7:00 to 8:30 PM on Thursday, September 20, 2017

I am very excited to begin a new school year with (you and) your child. Our K-1 classroom is an active, sometimes loud, often messy place! That is where the best learning takes place. I hope you can take the time to volunteer in our classroom and get to know all of the children. I would be honored to have you, as their first and best teacher, working with us on a regular basis or whenever you are able to be here to hang out. I will put out a formal volunteer sheet for specific times and days of the week, but you are *always* welcome in our classroom.

All my best,

Diane VanDorn

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