

September 22, 2019

Dear Lutherville Families,

I hope you had a great weekend and enjoyed the beautiful weather! To begin, we welcome all students new to Lutherville this year and extend a special welcome to our Social Emotional Learning (SEL) program. At Lutherville, we support all students and will work diligently to make sure that the needs of all students will be met, in a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment.

I want to thank our PTA Board as well as other parents who have brought concerns forward regarding program implementation and communication around our new SEL program. Enhancements and adjustments to the program have been made. The Office of Special Education for BCPS has provided additional supports to meet the needs of our students while we complete the hiring process for extra positions that have been allocated to our SEL program at Lutherville Lab.

For your information, we have been allocated a full-time social worker to support *all* students school-wide. Ms. Jen Hyde started with us on Tuesday, September 17<sup>th</sup> and will be working to meet the social and emotional needs of all students while working in collaboration with our school counselor, Mrs. Kiewe and our teachers.

In addition, we have been allocated a second SEL teacher (formerly called behavior interventionist). The role of the SEL teacher is to support, guide and redirect students who may be demonstrating inappropriate behaviors in school. The new SEL teacher, along with our current SEL teacher, Theresa Lawler, are allocated to the SEL program but are also available to serve all students at Lutherville Lab. The second SEL teacher has been hired, and as soon as they are able to begin their work at Lutherville Lab, I will communicate the person's name. Lastly, we have just hired an additional instructional assistant (para-educator) exclusively for the SEL program who will be announced shortly.

Over the next two weeks, either myself and Mrs. Owens will be participating with Mrs. Kiewe as she conducts classroom guidance lessons around the concepts of empathy and acceptance with a focus on the unique needs of their peers in our SEL program. After each lesson, Mrs. Kiewe will send home talking points for parents to share with their student.

In collaboration with the PTA Board and in response to feedback from many parents, I am providing you with the plan for improving home/school communication moving forward. It is my goal to ensure that all families receive clear and timely information. To that end, I will begin to provide:

- ✓ A monthly newsletter, rather than quarterly.
- ✓ A Sunday evening email & voice message with dates for upcoming events.
- ✓ Additional School Messenger voice communications throughout the year will be provided in a timely manner to all parents in the event that emergency responders are called to the school for any reason.
- ✓ The administration will also contact parents if their individual child, child's class, or grade level were to witness any atypical behavior of another student. This communication will be sent within 24 hours of the administration receiving information about an incident. This will enable parents to discuss the incident with their child.
- ✓ Beginning in November, I will convene a principal facilitated *Home/School Focus Group* of about 10-12 parents who represent the student demographics of Lutherville Lab to discuss school climate along with other relevant issues. School climate is a construct that refers to how students and families feel about their school, and whether they have a sense of belonging and safety. More information on this *Home/School Focus Group* will be forthcoming.

Moving forward, we will be working in partnership with the PTA to provide ongoing parent information nights on topics and programs that are current and relevant to teaching and learning, school climate, and

programs at Lutherville Lab. Future topics will be guided by the PTA based on parent input.

During my principal's report at the general PTA meeting on October 10<sup>th</sup>, I will provide a brief update on teaching and learning, school climate and programs at Lutherville Lab.

- ✓ Our first parent information night (which was collaboratively discussed with the PTA over the summer) will be held on Thursday, October 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:00-8:00pm, following the PTA meeting which begins at 6:30pm. Our invited speaker is Dr. Tana Hope, Psychologist, Director, Aliceanna Child and Family Therapy Clinic at Kennedy Krieger Institute. Dr. Hope will share information on Disability Awareness with parents.
- ✓ Once plans are finalized, our next parent information night for November/December will be facilitated by the Office of Special Education to provide an overview of the continuum of supports for students with special needs in Baltimore County Schools.

I look forward to seeing you at our PTA meeting on October 10<sup>th</sup> and want to thank our families who have reached out to me regarding the need for enhanced communication. I welcome your feedback!

Sincerely,

*Molly C. Bissell*  
Principal  
Lutherville Lab Elementary  
410.887.7800