



RICHMOND
FRIENDS SCHOOL

School News!

September
2011

A Good Place to Grow: Academics, Self-discovery, and Social Development

RFS Faculty

School Head

Marcie Roberts

School Coordinator

Nicole Blair

PreK-K Teachers

Marianne Cope

Meghan Scales (Assistant)

1-2 Teacher

Laura Sheets

3-6 Teachers

John Sheets

Cassie Gage (Assistant)

Support Teachers

Jason Jolley (Spanish)

Keith Cozart (Music)

Extended Care/Lunch

Kay Maurer

Office Manager

Terry Scott

School Head: Marcie

I hope this first official newsletter of the 2011-2012 academic school year finds you well. It is so exciting to welcome all 47 students into our classrooms this year as we celebrate our 40th anniversary. Chris Nicholson, co-founder of The Children's School (now RFS) joined us for All-School Meeting last week and looked around the room in amazement at all of the wonderful faces. She recounted her first day of school in 1971 when they had 6 students!

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of our families for a fabulous Orientation / Family Workday that helped us kick off our year in style. Each and every family was here and much was accomplished. Many folks signed up to help with various committee tasks as well. We are working hard at getting those committees up and running. There is no shortage of important initiatives for our community to tackle this year. We will be taking time to honor our past 40 years as our Board plans for the future while participating in upcoming strategic planning sessions. Our development committee will be launching a capital campaign and helping oversee our anniversary festivities. The marketing and recruitment committee is finalizing a DVD that will hopefully make its debut on Grandparents' and Special Friends' Day on Oct. 7th as well as helping to develop other promotional materials for the school. I could go on with the list of things we are sinking our teeth into, but I'll leave some things for later. I do want to highlight our All-School curricular theme this year – Wellness. We look forward to exploring all different components of Wellness with our students inside and outside of the classroom throughout the year. Thank you to Becky, our Curriculum Enhancement Convener, who has included a column in this issue addressing the benefits of diet and exercise and how they relate to academic performance and overall happiness. Keep reading!

Lastly, I want to share some of my favorite things about the beginning of school that I think are unique to Richmond Friends School. Of course I love our traditions of having John's class make and serve homemade ice cream to everyone on the first Friday and then the next Friday having the whole school tromp down a creek together as a way to build community and explore nature. What I love most though is the overwhelming joy that our students have in coming here. Childhood is precious and school is a large, formative part of children's lives. Aren't we lucky to have a school where each child is treasured, challenged, supported and happy – happy to come to school each and every day as they lay the groundwork for a lifetime love of learning and sharing their gifts with the world? I think so.

School Calendar



September 15: Parents Night

September 22: Parent Teacher Conferences... Half-Day

September 23: Parent Teacher Conferences... No School

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A Year of Wellness: Becky Dimmick-Eastman



Ava enjoys some homemade sorbet the first week of class.

We all know that the physical health of our children is important, and that exercise and a healthy diet are important components of good health. These are compelling reasons for RFS to choose Wellness as our curricular theme this year. But did you know that physical activity and a nutritious diet have an impact on students' academic growth as well? There is a growing body of evidence that indicates that physical activity improves student achievement in the classroom – particularly in the areas of memory, attention span, and motivation.

Through imaging techniques, researchers have found that same areas of the brain that process movement also process learning activities such as attention and memory (Jensen, 61). These findings are supported by evidence that physical activity increases our memory and our ability to retrieve information that is stored in the brain (60). According to the School Health Policies and Programs Study, only 13.7% of elementary schools require physical education at least three times per week (SHPPS, 1). However, Jensen (63) states that students who participate in physical education achieve more academically and have a more positive attitude about school than those who do not.

Nutrition also has an impact on a student's ability to learn. The inclusion of healthy foods and regular water consumption have been shown to help brain development (28). Richmond Friends School has always had a focus on the whole child. The school's commitment to outdoor play, physical activity, and healthy food extends back for the entire 40 years of the school's existence. This year, we celebrate not only the school's anniversary, but also 40 years of healthy bodies – and healthy minds.

References:

Jensen, E. (2005) *Teaching with the brain in mind*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD

School Health Policies and Program Study. (2006). Physical Education [Survey]. Physical Education. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/shpps/2006/factsheets/pdf/FS_PhysicalEducation_SHPPS2006.pdf

Pre-K/K: Marianne



Brodie uses water from our rain barrels to moisten the soil of the school garden.

We've been in school two weeks and already your children are becoming familiar

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with classroom routines and the schedule of the day. The older children from last year have been a tremendous help with showing the new students what to do. This is one of the wonderful parts of being in a mixed age classroom. Some of the really important routines of the morning are: signing in, taking books out of returned book baggies (remind them but please don't do it for them), and doing the morning work jobs. If you have time and want to stay to help with the morning work job, you are certainly welcome to do this. It is a nice time for you to become familiar with the classroom and your child's classmates. As you do help your child, be mindful of encouraging independence and responsibility. We encourage you to get to school on time, it does help your child get off to a good start to the day and it means we can move on to the next activity in a timely manner. Thanks for your effort in this regard.

We have many things going on in the classroom. Caterpillars are munching away, chrysalis and cocoons are being made and a Monarch butterfly has emerged and now flown away. So far the focus has been on insects, bugs and spiders. Yes, there is also lots of interest in Snowflake, the classroom snake, and our new guinea pig, yet to be named. With the interest in insects, spiders and other animals, we have discovered that Eric Carle books are perfect ones to read and enjoy. He writes and illustrates so many about animals. We are reading as many as we can and looking at similarities and differences in his various texts. If you have any of his books at home that we don't have at school and would like to share them, please bring them in. Right now we have a shelf designated just for his books.

We were so lucky to have warm weather when we planted the garden and now, with lots of watering, to have the seeds come up so quickly. Your children have been diligent with watering, using water collected from the roof in our rain barrels and eagerly checking the rain gauge to see if we have gotten any rain. A bonus of having arrival and dismissal out the back is that we get to double check our plants on a daily basis and show you as well.

Speaking of arrival and dismissal, we hope this new system of my class coming in the back is

We hope this new system of my class coming in the back is working for everyone. It does alleviate congestion in the front hallway. Marcie, Nicole, and I will try to be diligent about leaving notes on/or by the outside door to let you know you have mail or if there is some important information to convey. Please give us feedback on how this is working for you.

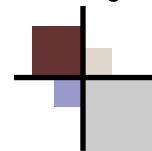
We love our beginning of the year traditions: The ice cream social when we all gather at the end of the first week to share homemade ice cream made by John's class. Thank you John's class! The first All School Meeting when we get our new pen pals and then followed by the creek walk which we share with families and our pen-pals. We always look forward to these times with excitement. They are special times as we come together to get to know each other better and build school community. It was a delight to have so many parents and families joining us on the creek walk. Thank you for coming and helping with the driving.

It has been a good beginning to the school year. I am enjoying getting to know the new students and their families and of course reconnecting with the older students and their families. Thank you for all your help on the beginning workday. It has made for a smooth beginning to the year. I also owe thanks to my new assistant, Meghan, who is diligently keeping me on track and joining in with all aspects of classroom work. It is a pleasure to have her working with me. Please don't hesitate to engage her in conversation about what is going on.

As the school year begins, there are often questions or concerns that you may have. Please do ask them. If you don't have a chance to talk with me in the classroom contacting me by email works well. cope.marianne@gmail.com I try to check it daily but do not have access to it during the school day. If this doesn't work feel free to call me at home. 966-8622 I'm looking forward to the year ahead.

Coming up:

Parents Night – Sept. 15 the children are already hatching a plan.



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Trip to Wessler's Apple Orchard – Sept. 20
9am-11: 30am we'd love to have you join us
and will need drivers.

Parent/teacher conferences –Sept. 22 and 23
I will be putting up a sign up sheet for times by
the back door near the coat hooks. Please let
me know if these times don't work and we will
try to arrange something different.



Marianne introduces Lizzybeth
to some creek critters.

1-2: Laura



Laura Sheets' class takes a break to share their smiles
on a sunny September afternoon.

We start each day by gathering on the rugs. We greet each other and then have a few minutes of silence. Each day, the silence has been a little longer, a little more thoughtful, and a lot more peaceful. I am aware during these times of stillness of just how much we are becoming our own little community.

The students have been very eager to get started with math this year. Who am I to say no? After some exploring to see where I should have each student begin, the students are off and running with their math books. The way we do math in my classroom, each student advances at whatever pace works best for them. I impress upon them that we all have different talents and challenges, and that it is my hope that they will celebrate each others' successes, rather than feel competitive. Should I find that a student needs some extra practice in order to master a particular skill or gain a deeper understanding of a math concept, I'll work with them to make sure he or she is ready before moving on to the next concept. We are working on establishing a balance between efficiency and accuracy.

Spelling lists and tests have started out very well. As I write this, we have had one spelling test, and every single student got all their words right! For now, first graders have five words to learn each week, and second graders have 10 words. In time, all the students will have 10 words. I select the words for their lists from their own writing, from words we are reading in class, and to help learn certain spelling/sound patterns.

We've been busy as bees, learning about bees. We've watched a video, looked at lots of books, created, drawn, discussed and written about bees. We had hoped to have a beekeeper visit, but it never worked out. I'm sure we'll be on to some new fascination soon. Stay tuned!

Each day after lunch, I read aloud to the students. Currently, I am reading Little House In The Big Woods, and the students are loving learning about the old-fashioned ways and how families worked together in those days. You may find it fun to ask the

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. The students have completed their first writing/drawing work. This time, they wrote about what super power they wish they each had. When you see their writing, you'll see that their spelling is progressing but not entirely "correct." That's more than okay, it's great! Their focus is on being brave and creative and thinking new thoughts. The change to correct spellings during writing is gradual, and you'll see it coming along.

Homework is going very well. The students are proud to be increasingly responsible for completing their work and bringing their homework back in its folder each day. Thank you so much to all of you for your support with this!

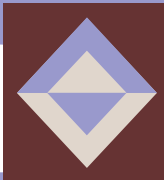


Sharon enjoys sketching outside with some sidewalk chalk.

We are so thankful for the adventure of the creek walk at Marianne's house each year. It was lots of fun. The water was nice and cool. The shade-covered creek was just perfect for the hot day we had. Thanks to all the parents who joined us as well as to all the others who made sure the students were prepared with towels and appropriate creek walking shoes.

I am looking forward to a wonderful year. As always, if you have any questions or a happy story to share with me, please do send me an email. My email address is: LauraSheets@comcast.net.

3-6: John



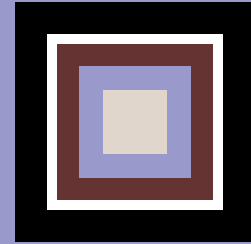
The summer was absolutely wonderful. I learned about the wonders and pitfalls of staying in a yurt. I got used to riding the light railway in Baltimore. I was directed to an excellent local fishing hole (thanks, Kay!) And I was able to enjoy the company of my in-laws, which is wonderful. Many of these things were aided by the kind gifts of many community members via the Laura and John honeymoon fund. Thank you for your generosity.

I am happy to say that this year has started well thanks to my dedicated students, their families, and the other faculty and staff of our school. I was a bit worried going into this school year with the largest class size in my history at Richmond Friends School and some individual learning challenges, both of which would stretch my ability to focus on and meet the needs of each of the students. I was so relieved after I returned from my honeymoon and was able to meet Cassie Gage, my wonderful assistant. She has followed every direction that I have given, has been exceptionally responsible, has filled in as a capable assistant during aftercare, and has an innate skill for recognizing when students need help. She will be an invaluable addition to the classroom and the school this year.

I would like to take this opportunity to share some information about the upstairs' class for parents of students in my class, parents who may, one day, have students in my class, or people who are merely interested. For dismissal, feel free to come upstairs to collect your child; you can send a proxy upstairs, like a sibling, another student, or a remote controlled robot; you can make arrangements with me for your child to look out the front window for your arrival; or you can yodel at the bottom of the steps to call your child. Students in aftercare will be sent there after they establish that they are ready to leave and I am sure that Kay is ready for them. By the way, feel free to visit the classroom whenever you like. We are only up the stairway not on another planet.

Richmond Friends School Wish List

sandbox toys (sturdy shovel, trowel, etc.)
digital camera (zoom and easy to use)
boys and girls dress-up clothes
child-sized garden tools (hoes, shovels, weeding, etc.)
avian egg incubator
large vinyl bean bags (not cloth, large enough for several children)
whiteboard (4 x 8 feet, magnetic a plus)
prize box goodies (small toys, trinkets, non-food items, new or gently-used)
headphones and microphones for a cassette player
a large vinyl bean bag
composition books
headphones with mini-jacks



Jacob prepares to blow some leaves on Clean Up Day.

Music: Keith

What's happening in music time? The most notable news at this point in the semester is we've moved to Mondays. It rolls off the tongue better, "Monday Music Time." Well, here is some things to expect this semester. I'm planning to schedule several guest musicians. Aiming for a variety from different instrumental families; strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion and voice. I've already spoke to some of you musically talented parents about sharing your skills and knowledge at music time. If you have unrevealed musical talents and are interested in being a guest, please email or stop me in the hallway at drop off/pick up. It is always a thrill for kids to see their parents involved. Otherwise the semester will be filled with silly musical games, songs, dancing, hand jives, note reading, instrument playing/making and as always "The Joke of the Day."

Spanish: Jason

September brings a change in the weather that is perfect for talking about a wide variety of clothing and colors! As this is the same subject that we were studying at the end of the year, this is meant to provide some sense of continuity as the students adjust to the presence of a new Spanish teacher!

To get to know one another better and to let the students get a glimpse of Mexico in general, we have been looking at photos from my old hometown, Mazatlan, Sinaloa! Students of all levels are also learning the traditional Mexican folksong "Cielito Lindo". (a.k.a. "Ay, ay, ay, ay!"). All classes will also integrate music and other elements of Latin American culture, including various visitors from a variety of Latin American countries! ¡increible!