

Dear Kindergarten Families,

One of my FAVORITE things about working in education is the first day of school for kindergarteners. I love watching them walk in the school building wearing backpacks that are half the size of their little bodies, toothless smiles, and joyful excitement about all of the new experiences that await them!

A top priority for our team is that our students have a feeling of belonging while they are at Journey. For that reason, I am excited to let you know about a new way of starting the school year for our kindergarten families. Instead of launching right into a typical kindergarten schedule, the first week of school will be a "**Kindergarten Orientation Week**". The purpose of doing this will be to create a strong kindergarten community that supports the unique needs of every child. Kindergarten orientation week will give all four kindergarten teachers a chance to get to know each student while the kindergarten students are able to learn how to "do school" with the support of their teachers, administrators, support staff, and all of their classmates.

So, how will this work? Please read the information below so that you know the plan... (Sorry it's so long, but I expect you will want as many details as possible!)

- **Friday, August 5: The SIS Parent Portal Open for Grades K-5 and Kindergarten Team Letter Sent to Families**
 - Please note that the teacher who is assigned to your child in the SIS Parent Portal will be your child's "Check In/Check Out" teacher during the first week of school. You will find out their permanent classroom teacher on **Thursday, August 25**.

- **Thursday, August 18: Meet the Teacher Night for Grades 1-5**
 - Kindergarten families will NOT need to come to this event, but you are welcome to walk around the building and start getting a feel for where everything is located. If you choose to visit to Journey on 8/18 and you'd like to bring allergy-aware (Cheerios, pretzels, etc.) snacks for students to share during the first week, you may drop them off at the designated table in the front lobby.

- **Monday, August 22: The FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL!**
 - Students will start the day with their Check In/Check Out teacher (the teacher assigned to them in the SIS Parent Portal). Children will have a brief morning meeting each day and then head to different locations in the school building for "ROAR Training!" (basically, learning routines and procedures and getting excited about all the fun in store at Journey Elementary!)

- **Tuesday, August 23-Thursday, August 25:**
 - Students will have individual color coded badges that we keep at school each day. On Tuesday-Thursday, their badges will have different colored stickers on them that correlate with one of the kindergarten teachers. After the morning meeting with their Check In Teacher, children will be divided into their groups for the day, based on the sticker colors on their badges. They will stay with the same group for the rest of the school day, participate in rotations of activities and lessons

designed to help them acclimate to school, complete some short assessments focused on letter and number identification, and have many fun opportunities to interact with new friends.

- **Thursday, August 25: Meet the Teacher Night for Kindergarten Families!**
 - By 4:30 PM on Thursday, you will receive your child's permanent teacher assignment along with that teacher's Welcome Letter via email.
 - From 5:00-6:00 PM, kindergarten families will participate in their own special Meet the Teacher Night. Please stop by to meet their teacher, see the classroom, and drop off school supplies. After that, please meet Mrs. Herbert (Assistant Principal) and I on the playground where we will be waiting with some popsicles for you to enjoy!

- **Friday, August 26: Students' First Day with their Assigned Teacher and Typical Daily Schedule**

In designing our plan, we worked with other local school leaders who approach the first week of kindergarten in the same way. They reported that this way of doing things strengthens the feeling of family in the kindergarten community, allows students to more successfully get used to the routines and procedures of the school day, and ultimately ensures that students get their unique needs met. Since this is our first year doing a Kindergarten Orientation Week, we will definitely send out a parent survey at the end to find out what went well and what you would suggest to make the Kindergarten Orientation Week an even better experience in the future.

Thank you so much for your support- we cannot wait to meet you!

Sincerely,
Emily Dittmer
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