

**From the Desk of the Principal – Walker School**  
**Eric Chisausky**  
**November 2016**

Dear Walker Families,

As this first trimester comes to a close, I want to provide a brief overview of how things are unfolding for the 2015-2016 year at Walker School. I am very proud of our students' hard work, and I know our Walker staff appreciates the support you provide at home to help our students have a positive school experience!

**Math In Focus**

Recently (10/20), I sent an email about logging into *Think Central*, an online parent resource for Math In Focus. I encourage you to spend some time exploring the different features (virtual copies of the classroom textbook, manipulatives, and videos) that provide information on the strategies and concepts used throughout the Math in Focus program. If you were not able to attend the D181 Math Night on 10/15, *Think Central* is a fairly comprehensive resource for parents.

I recognize that when you attempt to help your child complete MIF homework, the process for students to work through problems, such as multi-digit multiplication, feels unfamiliar to you. This online resource includes videos for each chapter and outlines the learning objectives, which we hope will help you use the strategies and language our teachers are applying in the classroom.

Perhaps, the most important communication piece for each MIF chapter is the *School to Home Connections*, which teachers send home at the beginning of each unit. These ***School to Home Connections*** detail the **specific skills** and **“Vocabulary to Practice”** along with an **extra activity** on which you can work with your child. Of course, as you have questions, you should contact your child's teacher to better understand how to support your child at home.

As I have been discussing with parents the process of implementing Math In Focus curricular materials, some parents have expressed the desire for a Walker *math presentation* to better understand how to support students at home. I am in the process of planning an informational opportunity for our parents, and I will send out another communication about this soon. In the meantime, I encourage you to utilize the above mentioned resources and then contact your child's teacher when questions arise. As always, you are welcome to contact me as well.

**Growing and Giving...Thanks!**

I would like to send a big shout-out to Maggie Lynch and Amy Phillips, as well as the Executive Board of the Walker PTO for coordinating another terrific fundraiser. I am moved by the generosity of our families and your support of our Walker students. The money raised through the auction this year will go a long way in supporting and sustaining programs, such as assemblies, in-class field trips, and

other enhancements for our students. Last year, our fundraising efforts helped us to purchase 65 iPads, distributed to all of our classrooms for students to use as learning tools.

### **Supporting Your Child**

As a parent, you might find yourself reflecting on the most effective ways to support your child, especially when they struggle at times. Check out what Carol Dweck's research says about praising *effort* over *achievement*:

<https://youtu.be/NWv1VdDeoRY>

As your child engages in learning new concepts—say, Math In Focus—I encourage you to praise their *effort* in working through their learning struggles. It is healthy to develop a strong work ethic, of course, and such a work ethic comes about when children exercise *resilience*. Thank you for supporting our Walker students to become flexible thinkers and resilient young people!

### **What Did You Learn Today?**

Have you ever tried to talk with your child about what happened in school on any given day? Maybe you asked, "What did you learn today?" And maybe your child responded with a flat "nothing" or "I don't remember." Certainly, every day at school is busy and full of learning and activities, but if your child is anything like mine, they can't quite find the words to express what happened at school.

I recently attended a professional development session in which the speaker suggested two questions parents could ask to pinpoint the goings-on of your child at school. I tried these questions on my second grade son at home, and we had a detailed conversation like I have not been able to engage before. (Of course, you will have to establish some expectations for answering these questions...like *no video games till you can provide examples*.) ☺ Simply put, I'm learning sometimes we parents just need to ask the right questions!

- **What feedback did you receive from your teachers today?**
- **What mistakes did you make?**

### **Walker School Improvement**

Each Monday our Walker teachers meet after school to engage in strategic planning for this year. Recently, we discussed our school improvement goals in the areas of Reading, Math, and SELAS. Throughout this school year, our teachers will continue to meet weekly to plan for our students.

This year, our Reading focus is on small group instruction and targeted reading levels to support our students' growth. Additionally, we are integrating writing across all content areas to offer as many opportunities as possible for students to become better writers.

As you would expect, we are focusing our math goals on implementing the Math In Focus curricular materials. Also, we are focusing our work on teaching problem solving strategies and using formative assessments to support our students to become better at math.

For SELAS, we are continuing to develop our Student Leadership Club's impact on a positive school climate. As you may know, we are finding the implementation of our CHAMPS student behavior management system (common language and expectations) to have improved a safe and positive school environment. Lastly, it is our goal to increase the Home to School communication of how our students are becoming better members of the Walker community.

### **Report Cards**

By now, you probably know that Walker will make report cards available online. Please refer to this week's (11/4) Walker Wednesday News for step by step directions for accessing your child's report card using the Parent Portal.

### **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

About this time, you should be receiving information from your child's teacher about signing up for parent-teacher conferences. Please remember, these are non attendance days for students. We hope to see you during conferences next month.

Monday, November 23

2:00 – 8:00 PM

Tuesday, November 24

8:00 AM – 2:00 PM

### **Look Who's Tweeting!**

Walker now has a Twitter Handle and Facebook Page. We are hoping to connect with Walker community as we get ready to celebration Walker School's 10 Year Anniversary .

Follow us on Twitter: *@walkerschool181*

Find us on Facebook: *Walker School 10 Year Building Anniversary*