

**Dear New Parents:**

**The following questions and answers are geared toward new parents coming to Medina Elementary. These questions and answers were compiled from the expertise of some of previous new parents. If you have further questions, please feel free to contact an experienced neighbor or call the school.**

## **TO & FROM SCHOOL**

**Q: How does a Kindergartner know how to get on the right bus to come home? What happens if they miss the bus? Any monitoring?**

**A:** During the first week of school, Kindergartners receive a lot of help from teachers, parent volunteers and a school staff member assigned to help with bus loading. Throughout the year there will always be a staff member available in the bus loading zone to assist children. If a child misses the bus, the child will be taken to (or should go to) the Main Office and school staff will contact a parent.

**Q: What do Kindergartners do during the 10-15 minutes after the bus arrives but before classroom activities begin?**

**A:** They line up outside the classroom. Kids are not allowed into the school until 8:00AM. There is no supervision until the school bell rings.

**Q. If my child doesn't take the bus, how early can I drop them off at school? Do I need to walk them in or pick them up at the door?**

**A.** You cannot drop children off before 8:05AM. At 8:05 children can be dropped off at the entrance to the school. Please note that you *may not leave your car unattended in the drop off/pick up circles*. Children are only allowed to enter and exit cars on the *curb side* for safety. There is no need to take your child to the classroom door but if you are going to walk your child in then you must park your car in a designated parking spot – same rules apply for picking up after school. Teachers will also bring students who are being picked up in cars out to the front of the school where children can see when a parent arrives. Drop Off and Pick Up times are hectic and parking is limited.

**Q. What if the bus doesn't come?**

**A.** This is indeed a rare occurrence. The school will contact you or you can send a parent to call the school for more information.

**Q. What if I am late for picking up my child from school or the bus?**

**A.** This has happened to all of us at one time or another. If you are picking your child up at school, instruct your child to go to the main office if you are not there to meet him/her at the agreed upon time. The office will then call you. For the bus, it is advisable to work out a plan with your child in advance. Decide whether they should go to a neighbor, go home with someone else, etc. It is recommended that parents compile a list of home phone and cell phone numbers of the other parents at the bus stop for emergency situations and unplanned delays.

## **FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL**

**Q. What kind of school supplies does he/she need?**

**A.** For kindergarten and beyond, your child will need a backpack for carrying art projects, tiger bytes, lunch, homework and library books. For kindergartners, a supply list will be sent home the first week of school. They typically share supplies like glue, crayons, pencils etc. So if you buy supplies, don't mark them with your child's name as they will be put into a communal supply.

**Q. What does my child need for the first day of school?**

**A.** A backpack, snack and lunch or money to buy lunch.

**Q. When will I find out the name of my child's teacher?**

**A.** Kindergartners will receive teacher assignments and will have the opportunity to meet their teachers at the Newcomers Party the last week in August. All other class assignments will be posted at the school on the Friday evening before Labor Day.

## **LUNCH & RECESS**

**Q. How do Kindergartners make their way to the cafeteria at lunch? Are they guided there? Who watches them?**

**A.** During the first 2 weeks of school Kindergartners receive some assistance from teachers, parents and assistants. They sit at lunch with their class. There is supervision to ensure that everyone sits down and attempts to eat. The class is typically excused together to go to recess. On Wednesdays, kids can sit at whichever table they want.

**Q. How does my child buy his lunch? What happens if he/she forgets their lunch number?**

**A.** Each child is given a lunch number with which to buy lunch. This number is sent to you in a letter by Nutrition Services and will be used while your child is at Medina Elementary. You pay into the account by leaving a check in the Main school office in the lunch money bucket, or you can send money via your child. I think this year you can also pay by credit card directly through Nutrition Services. If your child runs out of money, they will extend very limit credit and call you to let you know your child's account needs replenishment.

**Q. My child, while highly capable, still needs my help with his/her juice box, etc, will he starve at lunch?**

**A.** Again, during the first couple of weeks there is extra assistance from teachers, assistants and parents. Kids get the hang of it very quickly. While they may struggle with juice boxes and bags the first week, they have it down by the second week.

**Q. Who supervises the playground at recess?**

**A.** There are assistants and parents at recess. During the first half of the year, the younger classes have recess separate from the older classes

**Q. How are school injuries reported to me?**

**A.** You will be called by the nurse or your child's teacher.

## **CLASSROOM & CURRICULUM**

**Q. What is the best way to get involved in the classroom?**

**A.** During the first couple of weeks of school, at the PTA meeting and on curriculum night there will be opportunities to sign up. There are a number of ways to help out in the classroom: being a regular reading volunteer, helping out with homework, doing book orders, organizing parties as well as chaperoning field trips, helping out in the library are some examples. Some jobs require you to be at school, others can be done at home, so there are lots of ways to help.

**Q. What is a Room Parent?**

A. Each classroom should have 1 or more room parents. Room parents act as a liaison between the PTA and parents in the classroom and also assist the class teacher in organizing & scheduling classroom volunteers for a range of activities from reading buddies to classroom parties, etc. The room parent also handles the classroom fund, creates a class contact list, facilitates gathering information for the school directory, etc. It is a great way to be involved with your child's class, meet the other classroom parents and it is a wonderful way to get to know your child's teacher.

**Q. What is the Kindergarten curriculum at Medina Elementary?**

A. You will receive a packet that explains the kindergarten curriculum. There is also a Kindergarten curriculum night early in the school year where the philosophy, programs, etc is explained. This is an informative night. The information can also be found on the Bellevue School District website at <http://www.bsd405.org>

**Q. What is the best way to communicate with the teacher? Email? Phone? Notes?**

A. Ask your child's teacher early on what works best for them. All three are options.

**Q. Can I visit my child's classroom anytime I want?**

A. Ask the teacher when the best time is to visit your child's classroom. Most classrooms can be easily visited. Please remember to sign in at the main office before going to your child's classroom.

**Q. Is there homework?**

A. This will be discussed during curriculum night. For kindergartners and first graders, literacy packets are sent home later in the year.

**ACTIVITIES & "WACKY WEDNESDAY"**

**Q. Where do I find out about after school activities for my child?**

A. The Medina PTA website ([www.medinapta.org](http://www.medinapta.org)) and the PTA newsletter, Tiger Bytes, are the comprehensive source of information. The PTA will send a weekly email and Tiger Bytes will be distributed monthly. These will include information on all activities at school, sign up sheets, lunch menus, PTA minutes, letters from Principal Jennifer Rose, etc. On Fridays, you should also receive the Kindergarten newsletter. This will have information on what is going on in your child's classroom. It's a great read and good scrap book material.

**Q. What is Wacky Wednesday?**

A. This is a series of classes including things like karate, basketball, drama, chess, and extra reading that is offered on Wednesday afternoons after school gets out. There is information on signing up for these activities in the early Tiger Bytes issues.

**Q. Can my child go home with a classmate for a play date after school?**

A. Yes, but you will need to inform the school via a note sent on that day that your child will be going home with his/her classmate. You will not be allowed to arrange this during the school day. If your child rides the bus, you will need a separate note for the bus driver that gives your child permission to get off at another stop on his/her regular bus or permission to ride a different bus if necessary.

**Q. What is the walkathon and how far is a "lap"?**

A. The walkathon is the PTA's fall fund raising event. This is the major fundraiser where the work is done by the kids. The walkathon takes place at the soccer field at the school. An oval that goes around the perimeter of the soccer field is setup and the kids walk around it. Each child receives a "Lap Card" and

volunteers punch the cards for each lap to keep track of the number of laps walked. Each class is given a goal - for kindergartners it is 30 laps. This event is great fun for parents and kids!

**Q. What is the PTA and do I need to join?**

**A.** The PTA is an important link in the communications chain between parents and the school staff and seeks broad participation in activities to enhance the activities of students. The PTA sponsors a number of programs and activities that enhance Medina Elementary including sponsoring teaching assistants, computer labs, playground equipment, Tiger Bytes, teacher appreciation, Wacky Wednesday activities as well as acting as a liaison with the school and legislature. This organization is made up of the parents of kids at Medina Elementary. It's a great organization to join to help enhance your child's experience at Medina. While there are general membership meetings several times a year, most of the work of the PTA is done by individuals and smaller committees. The activities of the PTA are supported by 2 major fundraisers: The Walk-a-thon in October and the PTA Auction in the spring. There are many volunteer opportunities which not only help our school but are also great ways to meet and get to know other parents (and it's fun too!). If you are interested in volunteering please inquire with your playgroup organizer or the PTA Co-Presidents, Tobey Bryant and/or Betsy Johnson.

**Q. What is the party policy?**

**A.** Each classroom gets 3 parties per year. The Kindergarten classes have an evening pumpkin carving Party which is the only large scale Halloween event at the school. Parties should be planned within the following guidelines:

- The party food should generally align with the nutrition policy and kids shouldn't get more than one sugar treat (one Halloween cookie, one cupcake, etc) since too much sugar is a real detriment to the learning environment (translation – a school or even a room full of kids on a sugar high is no fun!).
- Costumes should be worn only while the party is going on. They should be easy on, easy off, and they should be able to change into them in the classroom with minimal help – meaning they should fit over most clothes so changing isn't an issue. Costumes should not be worn to or from school or at recess or lunch.
- No masks, please! Make-up is OK but shouldn't be elaborate since we wouldn't want the kids to spend all their time putting it on and miss the party!
- The Kindergarten pumpkin carving party is the only large scale Halloween event at Medina.
- The classroom teacher can give guidelines for where snack is eaten and for any games. They are the ones ultimately responsible for the room and the safety of the kids so they may limit things like going outside if they think the costumes would be a trip hazard. It is essential that the parents helping make sure the room is in tip-top condition when the party is over since our custodians cannot be expected to clean up after so many parties.

The goal is that the students have fun and celebrate in a positive, constructive way so this overall plan for parties really helps with that. Limiting sweets and the focusing on keeping the parties low key also helps achieve that goal.