

August 25, 2006

Dear Parents,

I cannot tell you how thrilled I am to be writing this letter to you because there are so many exciting things to anticipate as summer comes to a close. Soon, I will get to meet all of my new students and learn about their passions, their dreams, their personalities, and even help with some anxieties. I'll get to share some of my favorite novels with them and find new favorites as they share theirs with me. I'll get to know a whole group of new parents who will become partners and friends. I'll have the opportunity to learn alongside my students as we explore the unknown. I'll get to go home and announce to my husband, for the 15th time, "Honey, you won't believe how amazing my kids are this year. They're so sweet and so brilliant. They're the best class ever!" This is a wonderful time of year, indeed.

Though you and I will know each other well by the end of the year, I'd like to take this opportunity to tell you a little about myself and to welcome you and your child to my class. This will be my 15th year to teach elementary school and my third in Montgomery County. Because of my husband's career, we recently relocated from Arkansas, and I can, indeed, call the Hogs. My teaching experiences have been quite varied. I have worked as a math specialist and have taught in 3rd through 5th grades in both rural and urban settings including inner city, small town, and private schools. This will be my eleventh year to teach fifth grade and my third with the Center for the Highly Gifted.

Professionally, I have published several creative teaching ideas in national magazines and professional journals. I have been awarded the Outstanding Classroom Practice award by the Arkansas Department of Education as well as Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching by the National Science Foundation and the President. I have been named Technology & Learning magazine's statewide teacher of the year, am a statewide winner of Compaq's Teaching with Technology award, have been awarded a Wal-Mart's Teacher of the Year award. I have presented math, science, and technology topics at state and national teaching conferences. I seem to be constantly seeking funding for innovative teaching practices and have been fortunate enough to have been awarded several grants. I am a candidate in waiting for National Board Certification and will be crossing my fingers until I get my results in November.

Having been identified as a gifted learner in a school where differentiation was not practiced, I can understand the frustration many highly gifted children face when not presented with a challenging curriculum. I know how it feels to agonize in college over the first B of my life when I realized that not everything would come as easily as it did in my public school years. I am dedicated to doing everything in my power to ensure that my students don't have to experience this frustration at a time when grades are competitive and careers are at stake.

This year will be extremely rewarding and challenging for your child. You, your child, and I will work as a team to set and reach goals and to see that he/she reaches his/her highest potential. We will all help make choices about time management, extracurricular activities, and organization. You and I share the same goals for your child's success. I am looking forward to an exciting and enriching year, and I want to thank you for sharing your precious child with me.

Sincerely,

Joy Wolfe

Mrs. Wolfe's Teaching Philosophy

- I believe that each child should be greeted with a warm smile when entering our classroom so that they realize how glad I am to be sharing my day with them.
- I believe that each child entrusted to me is a precious gift that should be treasured, nurtured, and treated with utmost respect.
- I believe that it is my obligation to do whatever it takes to reach every child and to inspire each one to fly to his or her highest potential.
- I believe that each of my students is an individual with unique strengths, talents, and needs.
- I believe that, while academics are important, it is my responsibility to foster the growth and development of the whole child.
- I believe no child in my care should feel embarrassed or humiliated in any way.
- I believe that learning should be highly engaging, and that school should be a safe environment where children are eager to take risks.
- I believe that it takes all of us working as a team: parents, students, school staff, and community members to create an exceptional learning experience.
- I believe that discipline should be handled in a positive way that encourages children to learn to make the best possible choices.
- I believe that each child should leave the room with their choice of a hug, a high five, or a handshake at the end of the day so they know that I was glad to spend the day with them and that I will look forward to seeing them again.