April 22, 2013

Dear Eliot Pearson Children’s School community,

Welcome back to school. I hope you and yours were all safe during the Boston Marathon attacks. In difficult times, we see how a community at large can come together. It is a week we will not forget for a long time to come.

Below are some useful websites to support your family through this difficult time:

Fred Rogers: "Look for the Helpers"

Tips for Talking to Children and Youth after Traumatic Events

Media Coverage of Traumatic Events
(scroll down to see section on children)

Your children's safety is our first priority. We are fortunate to be part of Tufts University and are part of their emergency alert system and under their protection. This summer the school will have new locks installed on all doors. All staff were trained in safety response protocol by the Tufts Emergency Management Director this past month, which included “lock-down and shelter in place” procedures.

In terms of the classroom this week, we will not be initiating conversations with children about these events. If a child who has knowledge about them brings them up, teachers will listen and keep their responses simple, concrete and discreet. Children will be calmly reassured that teachers will keep them safe when they are at school. If appropriate, children will be assured that teachers, administrators, parents and other adults (police, fire fighters, doctors) are all people who work together to keep them safe.

We are ever mindful that children pick up on everything and they will feel that their world is a scary place if the adults in their lives are expressing fear or worry. Young children can be very disturbed and scared by their caregivers or parents' distress and will be comforted more by our actions than words. Children may be worried about their own safety or the safety of their family. Simple, calm reassurances are most helpful to young children. Keeping our own emotions and opinions about these events in check, and sticking to normal routines will provide comfort and reassurance to children.

Other school information.
It's hard to believe we are in our last seven weeks of school. For me personally, it is a very bittersweet moment. I am savoring every day as part of our EPCS community. People have asked me, are you winding down yet? Oh no, in fact, just the opposite there seems so much more to do before I leave!
Our last PTAB meeting is coming up on Monday, April 29, from 5:00-7:00 PM. Childcare and dinner will be provided. (Sign up at the front desk.) We have two main agenda items for this meeting. The first hour will be an opportunity for our graduating GTAs, Sally Pfizer, Devanshi Unadkat, Natalie Kleefeld and Allegra Horne to do a brief presentation on their capstone project as a graduate student. We know these women as teachers of our children. Come find out what else they have been doing as graduate students over the course of the past two years!

The second hour will be a time to reflect on the past year of PTAB and do some preliminary planning for next year. Given there will be new director coming on board this summer, it may be best use of our time to highlight what are the things we want to preserve and continue for next year. The expectation and hope is that the new director will bring some of his/her own ideas for family-school partnerships and we want to be careful with filling up the calendar with all the “old” activities. However it is time to decide what traditions are most important to the EPCS community and to prioritize them.

Jenn Moffitt and Vonda Wright have done a wonderful job as our PTAB leaders this year, however both are stepping down. Vonda will be leaving the school and while Jen will be in the community, she will need to step down from this leadership position. We are looking for two more people who would be willing to serve as PTAB co-chair for next year. They will be the point person for the new director from the parent community. We are also looking for a small committee of parents who are interested in helping with the transition and being a resource for the new director. If you are interested in serving on the committee or as PTAB co-chair, please let Jen, Vonda or Kathy or me know.

Search updates. I also want to update you on the First and Second Grade teacher search. The search committee has begun interviews and we plan to bring in two finalists on May 2 and May 3. We hope many of you will be able to meet the candidates when they visit the school. They will spend some time in the classroom and have some time meeting families and others in the community. More details will be available soon.

The Director search is also in process. Dr. Christine McWayne will have more details in the next weeks about when the Director candidates will occur.

Other upcoming events:

Wednesday, May 1: Parent-Teacher Conferences, No school for children

Thursday, May 2: School Picture Day

Sunday, May 5: Walk for Hunger: Join the Eliot Team as a walker or a sponsor. We meet at 8:15 on the Boston Common and walk 2.5 miles to the first checkpoint in Brookline as the EP Team. Many participants continue on to walk further and some
even complete the full 20 miles. This community service event is one of the oldest and largest walkathons to support Project Bread.

**Tuesday, May 7: Flat Bread Pizza Night** for the Eliot-Pearson Children’s School scholarship fund. Proceeds from every pizza sold from 5:00 PM- 11:00 PM that night will go to our scholarship fund. Take out or eat in, delicious pizza for a great cause. Flat Bread Pizza- Sacco Bowl Haven, 45Day Street, Somerville, 617-776-0558

**Tuesday, May 14, 7:00-9:00 PM in the Curriculum lab. Special Education Parent Teacher Learning Group:** Jessica Minahan, will discuss her book, *The Behavior Code: regarding the relationship between Behavior and Anxiety*. Reserve your spot at the front desk.

As always, please speak to your teacher or any of the administrative team if you have any questions or concerns.

Peace,

Debbie LeeKeenan
Director