

July 19, 2016

Dear Wells Parents and Guardians,

I am very excited to be the new principal at Wells Elementary. I wanted to discuss my protocols for placement of students with teachers. Teachers and staff have worked diligently to provide the best possible learning environment for all students in the upcoming school year. This process is exhaustive and encompasses the input of general education teachers, special education teachers, core team teachers, and administration. The staff has put in weeks of hard work in order to build class rosters that meet the individual needs of students. It would be irresponsible for me as a leader to undo and undermine a process that has been put in place with my very limited knowledge at this point.

Experience has taught me that oftentimes one's reputation as an educator can be such that we create "*indispensable*" teachers. Herein, numerous requests can be made for a few educators in a given year and conversations can anoint teachers to superstar status while eliminating an opportunity for students to learn from future superstars or current superstars whose names have not been discussed by parents previously. This can deleteriously affect the impact that all teachers have on students. Some teachers are quiet by nature and do not always receive the accolades they deserve.

As a parent, I know that requests for placements and class changes are done out of love for one's child and I respect that. As an educator, I firmly believe that we must trust in the school and the staff and that the rationale for decisions made was comprehensive and systematic as teachers worked tirelessly to provide their input. I can think of hundreds of examples of how schools' decisions to place students have worked out tremendously well. To attempt to create class lists based upon having at least 3 friends in a class and not being paired with 3 students is an exercise in futility. My view is that we have an opportunity at the elementary level and that is to foster a love of learning in students and to create an environment where students work collaboratively to problem solve and utilize an inquiry-based approach to learning. Students may not get along or may have had problems with one another and this is the exemplification of a teachable moment. It is not what has happened in the past but will occur in the future. Our new Positive Behavior Intervention Support program will facilitate success in the area of positive relationships and collaboration.

I want you to know that the safety of students at this school is my foremost concern. As a principal who worked at extremely challenging schools with thousands of discipline referrals as well as disciplinary alternative school placements, I have always been able to create teams and structures to ensure school discipline is a non-issue because behavior is outstanding. I take great pride in being a leader who knows how to truly affect positive changes in schools. I have extremely high expectations for all. My litmus test for teachers is, "Would I want my own child in this classroom?" If I cannot honestly say yes, then that is a problem. However, given the accolades of WOCSD and this tremendous school district, we unquestionably have amazing educators.

I can assure you that I am not a conventional principal, I don't sit in my office, and I will do whatever it takes. I will ride buses, go out to recess, monitor lunch, and whatever else can be done to ensure success in the school. I will be everywhere, will know every student, and will proactively stop discipline problems before they happen. This is the way I do business. **Please know that I will not be honoring placement change requests.** I ask that you give me the time to help WES reach unprecedented levels of success by trusting in the process, knowing that the WES Team is here to provide the best academic opportunity for all students. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Christopher Roche, Principal, Wells Elementary

chroche@wocsd.org