

Dear San Gabriel Community,

I'm officially back to school and am rearranging our classroom, setting up new systems, and generally getting ready for the new year!

To that end, I'd like to share some thoughts and reminders about the school year:

**1. BOOK CELEBRATION!** We have already chosen our book celebration book for the year! George, Cole, Juliana, and Brandon offered their input and there was a tie between two books. The first one we'll read is *Heart of a Samurai* by Margi Preus. The second we'll announce later for our second celebration, later in the year. Here is the Amazon review:

In 1841 a Japanese fishing vessel sinks. Its crew is forced to swim to a small, unknown island, where they are rescued by a passing American ship. Japan's borders remain closed to all Western nations, so the crew sets off to America, learning English on the way. Manjiro, a 14-year-old boy, is curious and eager to learn everything he can about this new culture. Eventually the captain adopts Manjiro and takes him to his home in New England. The boy lives there for some time and then heads to San Francisco to pan for gold. After many years, he makes it back to Japan, only to be imprisoned as an outsider. With his hard-won knowledge of the West, Manjiro is in a unique position to persuade the emperor to ease open the boundaries around Japan; he may even achieve his unlikely dream of becoming a samurai.

*Heart of a Samurai* is a 2011 Newbery Honor Book.

For those of you who are new to our community, our book celebration events are not to be missed! We (adults and their child) all read the same book at home. We then gather for an evening, planned by the children, to discuss the book, share theme snacks, and generally enjoy each others' company.

So, the first step is to decide if you and your child will participate (please do!). In addition to parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, adult siblings etc. are welcome to be the adult representative. Then, order the book at the library, your local book store, Amazon, or on tape. Listen or read together over the course of the next few weeks. If the book is too difficult for your child, not to worry; read it aloud to them. The point of this group is to enjoy and celebrate a book together. I do not care a whit how you consume it! Conversations about the book will come up naturally; have them! Get the celebration date on your calendar: Thursday, September 20th from 6:30-8:00PM. That's it! Now go get your book/s!

**2. LUNCH AND SNACK.** Our elementary program and extended care will continue to emphasize healthy eating habits. I want to be clear that this does not come from a place of negative judgement. I am fundamentally committed to our children fueling their bodies with food that helps them think, play, and have positive energy. I am also committed to them learning, while we still have control over what is purchased, what is packed, and what is consumed, what healthy food is and why it matters to their lives as adults. I like Doritos as well

as the next person, but they do not have a place in our classroom as fuel. I will do my part and model healthy eating habits for the community. I make it a point to eat lunch with the children most days so they can see me eating well. I talk a lot about my athletic endeavors and how food fuels me.

Please start the conversation now with your child about what constitutes a healthy lunch and snack as well as the difference between that and a treat (I eat pizza, burgers, and cookies) but only as a treat. Children do not need a dessert with their lunch. Most adults do not have a cookie with every meal and our growing children do not need them either.

I will limit snack foods to those that fuel brains: yogurt, fruit, cheese, seeds, veggies and dip/hummus, etc... A fine before-school-starts activity would be to sit with your child and explore some recipe sites to find 4-5 snacks that they will eat and can make themselves. I will be discussing this with them so please lay the foundation at home.

This will extend to drinks as well. Please do not allow your child to bring Starbucks into our classroom. Unless they are drinking black coffee or plain tea, there is simply too much sugar in these drinks to start the day...and I'm certainly not advocating for black coffee! I'll also ask that they not bring in Gatorade or other sugary drinks.

Once again, in order to protect the health of our community members who are allergic, we are a nut free community.

**3. ABSENCES and TARDIES.** Please work hard to plan vacations, family visits, etc. on non-school days so that when a child is sick, they are not missing days on top of days they've already missed. I do the same and try not to plan my vacations during school hours.

I expect children to be at school, ready to work BY 8:30, not AT 8:30. This is no different than at most jobs, and so should be a standard that we are setting with our children during their school years. Please know that if a child is late, I will ask them about it and expect them to record it in their work journals. I consider any time after 8:30 as late; I expect you and your children will hold me to the same standard for my arrival to work. I will also send an email home about the late arrival, especially if it happens more than once.

**4. OVERNIGHT TRIP.** I have another date to put on your calendars. I won't offer much info right now as many more details will come in the future; I just want you to have the date. This year, our overnight trip will be different than in the past. It will be a living history program at Fort Ross. The dates are March 25-26th. Please mark your calendar. We'll be preparing for the trip up to six weeks before we leave as we'll be living like Russians, Coast Miwok, and Alaskan Native Americans. So, we have to learn what they ate, how they lived, what clothes they wore, what their names were, why they lived where they lived.....because when we go, we will go dressed in character and I've like these people did for two days. It is a trip that is out of this world.

I've taken my Woodland communities four times and Fort Ross is consistently listed as one of their favorite trips.

If you're adventurous and think it sounds super fun to dress like a historical character, live in wooden fort buildings, eat interesting food, and learn some Russian, Miwok and Alaskan language, let me know and I'll put you on the list to consider for chaperoning.

**5. SHOES and CLOTHES.** Please ensure your child wears shoes to school that they can run in and clothes that can potentially get dirty.

**6. MUG.** Each child should bring a regular-sized coffee mug on the first day of school that will stay at school. We use these for drinking water so that we don't have to have water bottles all over the classroom.

**7. SUPPLIES.** I will provide all the supplies that your child will need and in fact prefer that they do not bring their own supplies from home. I will specifically point out mechanical pencils and ask that they not be brought. The graphite breaks off and gets caught under chair legs and books and then rolls around as those objects are moved, marking whatever is in the path. Ugh!

**8. ASSISTANT.** I'm delighted to announce that we have a new assistant joining our community! Michael has worked as a tutor for various aged children and as an individual aide to a child in a Montessori classroom. He moved from that work to work in the coffee industry where he was a barista, roaster, and trainer in coffee cafes. Recently, he's wanted to reconnect with education and remembered the Montessori school he worked at as an intriguing place. This was all after he graduated from UC, Santa Barbara with a degree in Psychology. Micheal will be at our new community member orientation on Wednesday, August 16th and will be here in the morning on the same day to meet the new children in San Gabriel. Please go out of your way to welcome him to our community!

**9. NEW COMMUNITY MEMBER ORIENTATION.** As was already announced, there will be a meeting for parents new to the San Gabriel Community on Wednesday, August 15th from 6:30-8:00PM. All parents are welcome but I'll count on those new to the classroom to be there unless you let me know otherwise. You'll have a chance to meet me, Michael, and to hear about the upcoming year and expectations in San Gabriel.

**10. GOODNESS. I JUST FEEL LIKE THERE HAS TO BE A TENTH ITEM.** So, how about the truth? I am so excited to be leading your child's community this year. Last year was great but there was a lot of work to be done with construction, moving classrooms, transitioning to a new teacher for some, establishing new norms.... I am looking forward to all the energy spent on that being spent on really getting into the nitty gritty of a vibrant, active, profound Montessori community.

Let me know if you have any questions!

Wendy  
San Gabriel Guide