

# Episcopal



Wednesday, July 30, 2008

FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

Dear Episcopal Parents,

In church recently, the priest described the future for the faithful as “drenched in joy.” I pray that summer’s end finds you and your family drenched in joy, refreshed in mind, body and spirit.

Right now, I can only imagine such grace, because I continue to feel the spirit-numbing effect of traffic gridlock. Leaving Episcopal late this afternoon, the weather report stated, “feels like 103.” When I opened the car door, a blast of hot air seared my face. It took awhile, but by the time I exited the subdivision, the air conditioning was on full force. My body began to cool.

My spirit, however, did not. When I got to Sherwood Forrest, traffic was stalled. Sitting in my car, no longer perspiring from the heat, I was nevertheless steaming. It’s hard to quantify an assault on the spirit, but it’s easy to put a name to loss. What was lost during that 30 minute period while my car was “idle”? Precious and irreplaceable resources: time, peace of mind, money for gas, petroleum, the air that I polluted.

It was not an optimal way to spend an afternoon. Every day, most of you are in this traffic as you pick up your children at EHS. Although I know time in the car with your children can be valuable time for communication, other resources are becoming more scarce for all of us. With this in mind, I’d like to encourage you to consider establishing car-pools or signing up for ridership on Episcopal’s buses. On request, we will pull together zip code lists for carpools. There are still spots remaining on all of our bus routes. And for those students who live close-by, there are bike racks around the campus. Last spring, I counted three teachers who’d started to bike to school.

For many of us, time continues to be the most precious resource. Within the school day, the daily schedule is a testament to the value EHS places on the academic program. You may recall that during the 2007-2008 school year, we reconsidered and redesigned Episcopal’s master schedule. Generated as a strong recommendation from our accreditation team, the new schedule reflects best practices and is developmentally appropriate for each division. Our teachers received professional development to prepare them for increased time in the classroom. In the Upper School, where the changes will be more noticeable, new policies regulating homework and tests have been created (see *Parent/Student Guide*). An after school Test Center has been created for students who have missed tests due to absences or who qualify for extended time on tests. The Test Center will be open on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 3:45 to 5:00 pm.

In support of Episcopal’s strategic goal to become an example for environmental sustainability, you’ll discover exciting physical changes on our campus when you return next month. There are renovated classrooms for the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and a recycled school bus which has been transformed into a laboratory on wheels. The Eco-Bus will be used by students in all three divisions for field work in science. Both of these initiatives have received generous support from Episcopal’s Parents’ Guild. In addition, the wrapping of the Eco-Bus will be funded by Lamar Advertising.

The most dramatic change on campus is the Middle School Quad Drainage and Restoration Project. Flooding of Episcopal’s campus during heavy rains has been a major concern of the EHS community for many years. Knowing this, Episcopal’s Board of Trustees set aside funding for a “Drainage Project.” We’re delighted that our

Master Plan offered a more holistic solution to the problem, recommending the construction of a rain garden, rather than merely laying drainpipe. The rain garden combines storm water mitigation with a much-needed restoration of the landscape in the Middle School Quad. Because of the natural contour in the EHS site, our informed theory is that resolving the drainage on this part of the campus will also help alleviate standing water in other parts of the campus. Contractors are hard at work and (weather permitting) will have construction completed by the start of school. Renderings of the plan, a glossary of terms, and photo up-dates are available on the EHS web-site. In support of the project, Hilltop Arboretum has generously donated native plants for the bio-swale. I'm also delighted to share that Episcopal's environmental initiatives are featured as a part of Baton Rouge's Smart Growth Summit.

Communications at EHS is also undergoing a transformation. The new EHS web-site was launched to our alumni in July and has received much praise. We're all excited about the new features of the Whipplehill product: student information system, web upgrade, and additional modules soon to be introduced. We expect to go live to the entire EHS community by the time school begins. Stay alert for the communication of your password—it will allow you to enter the secure part of the website. Because the new site provides an option for parent broadcast, we will also communicate revised emergency notification information as soon as that goes into effect.


I've enclosed a list of Episcopal's new faculty and staff. We have been fortunate, once again, to attract teachers of quality and integrity into all three divisions. In addition, I'm proud to introduce the first three recipients of Episcopal's "Fellowship in Early Childhood Education". This inaugural group will be mentored into teaching, partnering with our Kindergarten teachers and assisting in other areas, especially athletics. Serving all three divisions will be Noel Parnell (EHS class of 1974) who joins us as the Director of Admissions and Marketing, Pam Lawson who has committed to the Advancement Office, and Annie Jung who assumes responsibility for the Cornerstones Program. Annie and Pam are EHS parents.

Episcopal has created a web of support to help incoming faculty and staff through their first year at EHS. Division Heads, Department Chairs, and Peer Mentors will work with new faculty and staff, integrating them into our community. While EHS previously had a mentoring program, the New Faculty/Staff Support Program is more thoroughly developed, as we've come to feel that it is our professional responsibility—both to the school and to our vocation—to assist colleagues as they transition into the high behavioral and academic standards of Episcopal.

Mentoring has also come to the forefront for our students. At the end of 2007-2008, four Upper School students returned from a school visit and worked with Annie Jung over the summer to establish a new program through Cornerstones. Beginning this year, juniors and seniors in the Upper School have taken on the responsibility to become Peer Leaders, mentoring new 9<sup>th</sup> graders into EHS. They will be easy to spot during the first week of school in their Peer Leader T-shirts. These T-shirts will act as a beacon, marking the "PLs" as a safe harbor for our new students—helping to address their questions and concerns.

As I review what I've written, it seems that 2008-2009 stretches in front of us, full of promise. I look forward to sharing a year that already feels full of potential and headed in a positive direction. It already feels drenched in joy.

I remain your faithful servant,



Deborah Kay Betts  
Head of School