

From the Principal's Pen
Submitted by: Jennifer McGee, Principal of the Atwood Primary School
September 2020



We can do hard things.

This has been my summer mantra.

Thinking about opening our schools with the pages of guidelines listed in Maine Department of Education's re-opening framework for safe re-openings, well... seemed hard. All summer long, the custodians, nurse, secretary, teachers, social workers, bus drivers, ed techs and administration linked arms and drew up plan after plan after plan after plan to safely open our doors to your children.

The part of the plan that remained unknown was how your children would respond to our new structures, routines, procedures, and requirements. We wrung our hands in worry as we sent all of our plans forward to you. And then the summer passed at warp speed, until...

...we opened on August 31st!

Our playground and parking lot were lined with faculty as the buses and your vehicles rolled into our parking lot on opening day. We held our breath wondering how the children would feel about (and I know people hate this saying) our "new normal".

Tiny masked face after tiny masked face arrived, one by one. And guess what? They were just fine, thank you. Happy! Excited! As we plucked the children out of their car seats, they were business as usual, grabbing their backpacks, blowing a quick kiss to their parents, and on with the show!

And the day went on, some children in our classrooms and some of our children with you at home and learning remotely. The children remained happy, excited, nonchalant and unphased by the masks, the shields, the distancing, the sanitizing, the lining up, the "two to a table"....they were just fine, thank YOU.

And I do mean, very intentionally, thank YOU. You had your children prepared and ready for "all of this". They weren't afraid. They were just the same. They were calm. They were patient. They were ready for school, in whatever form it was going to be delivered.

At the beginning of the week, I was given a gift by one of our teachers. It was a little book called "The Coffee Bean Book". The book tells the tale of a man who learns a valuable lesson about life. The tale is illustrated by a carrot, an egg, and a coffee bean. When you drop a carrot into boiling water, over time it becomes soft. When you drop an egg into boiling water, over time it becomes hard. But, when you drop a coffee bean into boiling water, over time it transforms the water into fragrant, delicious coffee.

When things are hard, does the situation make you become soft and weak, hard and rigid, or do you transform and change and evolve as you navigate the difficult situation?

This pandemic has been hard (understatement). It has separated us from one another, it has forced us to face fears, it has altered our lives and our livelihoods and our structures and routines, and it has threatened the health and wellbeing of so many on this planet, but we are continuing on.

Your children are watching how we all navigate this global threat. They are learning through us. They have watched all of us transform. We have changed the way we "do school" and they have watched all of you transform your lives to accommodate what they have needed all the way through this tumultuous time.

We have all been coffee beans. We can do hard things.

I am grateful to be on this journey with the wonderful children and families of Atwood Primary School. Whether your child is with us in this building, or remotely learning, we are sch-family....school family. We've got this.

Educationally Yours,

Jennifer McGee

Dates to Note:

- Tuesday, September 22 is an Early Release Day, 12:00 release
- No school on Friday, October 9: Teacher Comp Day
- No school on Monday, October 12: Columbus Day
- Flu Shot Clinic: Wednesday, October 14
- School Picture Day: Monday, October 26

Special Messages:

- Please be weather watchers....the days will be getting colder.
- Don't forget to send your child with a clean mask each day.

WE NEED ALL SCHOOL LUNCH FORMS RETURNED PLEASE, WHETHER YOU QUALIFY OR NOT!

