



**STRIDE Pride
Newsletter**

Sept. 10, 2009

Hello everyone!! I hope this note finds you filled with good thoughts about your child's experience thus far at STRIDE Academy. We continue to meet new families every week and they all come to these hallowed halls by way of word of mouth. We must be doing something right because we continue to have the support of parents, families, and friends of STRIDE Academy who feel good enough about their child's successes to let others know about us. We gain new students every week and we continue to see an increase in enrollment in the upper grades because I think you all are letting people know we are going to have a middle school. Thank You, Thank You, Thank You!!

We still have a lot of work to do and always will as we do not believe in setting idle and taking things for granted we have been blessed with the opportunity to bring the best educational experience to Central Minnesota and we are going to make that happen, BUT, we can not do it by ourselves. In other words we need you!!

One of the best ways we have found to build enrollment is to do what we say we are going to do....and that is to provide a school environment that is warm and welcoming. We hope you feel that way when you enter our school. We use curriculums and instructional techniques that are supported by years of educational research that say they work for children. We hire the very best teaching staff and then we build their capacity to an even higher level by providing ongoing teacher and teaching development activities to keep them at the top of their game. We hire the very best support staff who assist in the classrooms, the hallways, the lunchrooms, at activities, with the very best support staff and an administration that supports the staff and believes in instructional leadership and development of personal capacity leadership that challenges and rewards kids for their efforts, is to do a good how good this school is for our students, families, and the community.

We continue to find out that there are many, many people who have yet to hear about STRIDE Academy. It seems we still have a lot of work to do letting everyone know why STRIDE Academy should be part of your school choice process when making a decision about what is the best educational experience available for your child. There are many characteristics of this school that makes us unique but also are supported by educational data that say they work for children and staff. One of those unique characteristics is having students wear a school uniforms!! I am going to revisit this issue with you because we need you help and I also want to pass along an understanding of why we have our students wear uniforms.



Many people think that wearing a uniform takes away student individuality or makes every student look the same. I believe that it makes the students be the same. Be the same in the sense that what is on the inside matters more than what is on the outside. Keeps all kids on an even playing field and eliminates the "haves" and the "have-nots." Research also has shown that in schools where students wear uniforms there is a reduction in school crime, clothing related crimes, and peer-related pressure associated with clothing. It is hard to imagine anything like that happening with our children with all the stuff on television, the internet, and radio. In addition, it also promotes school community and the feeling that everyone is here for the same purpose and we are all in this together.

Now here is what we all need your help with. When you decided to join the STRIDE Academy family you decided to; 1. Join the best school in the state, little biased, but hey I dare you to compare our numbers to other local schools; 2. You agreed to abide by the standards and policies we have adopted because if you believe what we do is good for children then we expect that we will all protect what is good for all children. There is a uniform code and we expect that you will follow the uniform code. I am telling you it is not the most enjoyable part of my day when I have to go from classroom to classroom checking on whether or not students are wearing the right uniform.

I have enclosed the uniform code for the 2009-2010 school years. The wearing of khaki shirts, skirts, pants, or shorts and solid color polo's has not changed. There is one exception, so pay attention to item number three (2) this is different from the previous year's uniform code. The uniform code will be in full effect September 3rd, 2009:

1. Students will no longer be allowed to wear hooded sweatshirts; the ONLY hooded sweatshirts we are allowing are the officially approved and sanctioned STRIDE Academy hooded sweatshirts, that can be ordered about three times a year. You will be notified when you can order.

2. Students will be allowed to wear non-hooded sweatshirts because it will allow for the collar of the polo shirt to be seen over the collar of the sweatshirt;

3. If your son or daughter comes to school with anything other than what the uniform code allows they will be asked to change into something we have here or we will call parents at home and have you bring in a change of clothes;

4. We also know that sometimes uniforms can be cost prohibitive. However, we have some expert shoppers on staff and they know good places to get deals just ask around;

5. Money will never be a reason for any student to attend this school we will not allow that;

6. If you need assistance please contact Mr. Ulbrich or Mr. Beutel and we will get you started on a wardrobe for your child. We are glad to help out. We are in the process of developing a scholarship fund to help out families who need our help so don't worry we are glad to help out. We are a school designed and built to serve our constituents and taxpayers;

7. The reason we allow STRIDE hooded sweatshirts is because we know that what is on the sweatshirt meets our expectations and keeps the bad press or the inappropriate material symbols and emblems out of the building.



STRIDE Academy Uniform Code and Policy for 2009-2010 School years

STRIDE Academy will require the children to wear uniforms. The uniform top consists of any solid colored polo shirt. A polo shirt is defined as a collared shirt, no stripes or prints, and it consists of buttons, preferably no more than five, but it can also not have any buttons. The children may wear long-sleeve, short, or sleeveless polo shirts. Students may wear a solid colored sweater or non-hooded sweatshirt over the polo shirt. The collar of the polo must be visible over the collar of the non-hooded sweatshirt. The only exception is that students may wear hooded STRIDE Academy approved sweatshirts, and that is the only hooded sweatshirt that can be worn.

The uniform bottoms must be khaki colored pants, shorts, skirts, skorts, shorts, or capris. Any style is acceptable (ex. Cargo, relaxed, straight leg), no camouflage please. All skirts and shorts must be at least mid-thigh or 2 inches from the thigh in length. STRIDE Academy staff will monitor the uniform and will notify students and parents if the child is not meeting expectations for the dress code. A color brochure is available on the web-site or upon request. If the student is not wearing the correct uniform, they will be asked to change clothes and get into the correct uniform at school. We will take great care in helping your son/daughter make the change as not to embarrass them or make a spectacle out of the situation. We do have limited extra clothes on hand here at the school and if we can't find the correct fit or size for your child parents will be called to bring in the correct uniform.

This policy is very important to all of us and the kids really notice it if someone is not expected to wear the same kind of uniform they are required to wear. They know how important it is to all of us feeling good about who we are and not about what we are.

Well I have said enough about the uniform code now let's get back to making this school experience the best educational and learning experience your child will ever have had.

"To Live, To Love, To learn, and to leave A Legacy." What will be your legacy?

After School Program

The After School Program is off to a great start. We have many workers helping us out. We have hired Mr. Bruce Flees to work on Tuesdays and Thursdays with myself, Mrs. Weyer. Ms. Sarah Kolstad works with us on Mondays and Wednesdays with Ms. Krista. They will take turns working every other Friday.

We are sad to say good-bye to Ms. Alicia Polzin. She will be around coaching volleyball. Ms. Tiffany Wallwork will also be leaving to go back to school at the U of M. It was great having them help us out when they could.



Beyond the Status Quo

Three words that I hear too often are "as compared to". I hear these words from parents at games, parent conferences, from teachers during scheduling time, from board members when we talk about test scores or student expenditures and I even say these three words to myself whenever there is doubt.

At STRIDE, I want to move beyond the status quo. I want to keep the focus on our own goals, targets and improvement areas. The STRIDE community has always expected more and I am always asked the question of how we compare to local schools. My answer is, I don't know about other schools and I can tell you that research proven techniques we have implemented work for our students.

1. High Expectations for ALL students.

STRIDE is dedicated to using a rigorous, rich and proven curriculum. We make NO excuses at STRIDE. We will not blame the students, parents, the state or other life circumstances. We understand that if teachers motivate, educate and empower, in that order, ALL students can and will achieve.

2. Individualized Learning

Students are assessed to develop an individual learning plan for each child. Gone are the days where there are 32-4th graders in a class receiving 4th grade math. If some students are higher learners, they traditionally receive extra worksheets. At STRIDE, we ensure small classrooms and place students in classes where the students are at the same level for math and reading. This helps the teacher meet the needs of students and guarantees the individual needs of the child are being met.

3. The Gift of Time

STRIDE Academy students attend school for 180 days and makes the most of our precious time. The year round school is proven to reduce the amount of review time after summer break. The average traditional student spends four weeks reviewing upon returning to school. STRIDE students spend two days reviewing. Over the past four years, our students have completed 1.2 years of curriculum in one academic year. That is more than one grade level by the time a child reaches 6th grade. Our teachers and students don't stop just because they are at the end of the text. They move on to next year's textbook

4. Collaboration

The traditional school often functions as a collection of independent contractors united by a common parking lot. --Robert Eaker

In the book *Results Now*, Mike Schmoker writes about the catastrophic consequences isolation has for teachers and teaching. Our greatest strength at STRIDE Academy is Collaboration. Our teachers work hard to inspire students and go above and beyond to meet with ALL of your child's teachers to increase student performance. Teachers meet at least twice per month to review student data and collaborate on strategies to help meet your child's needs. Teachers also work with data to focus instruction for your child and communicate with parents in setting yearly goals for students.5.



5. Results Orientated

Ask any educator if their school is "good". The answer will always be yes. But why?? What is a "good" school and how is that determined. At STRIDE, we know the answer. We set goals for ourselves and if we meet the goals, we know we have done a good job.

Some of the goals from last year include:

1. 90% of ALL students increase more than one grade level in reading and math. **MET**
2. Increase the percentage of students that are proficient on the state tests by 5%. **MET**
3. Meet AYP (Annual Yearly Progress) as determined by the state and federal government. **MET**
4. Students attend school on average 95%. **MET**
5. Reduce discipline incidents by 20%. **MET**

6. Close the achievement gap between students of color and caucasian students by 10%. **NOT MET**

These are STRIDE's goals from 2008-2009 that we have developed based upon our needs. These standards go above and beyond what any governmental agency has determined. While we are not perfect, we can identify are strengths and determine opportunities for growth.

Jason Ulbrich, Education Director



