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December 19, 2017

Dear Families,

We're nearing mid-year 2017-18, our first year with newly-formed single grade approach for First and Second grades. After having mixed-age groups across two Primary classrooms for several decades, I want you to have an update on the single grade First and Second grade classrooms this year and let you know our plans moving forward.

The move to single grade classrooms arose out of a coordinated examination of our grade structures for our Early Childhood through Primary (First and Second) grades by a committee of PMFS administrators and faculty over several years. This examination has benefitted from multiple perspectives—input and sharing from teachers, parents, alums—and a review of research on single- and multi-grade groupings for learning. It became clear to us that there are benefits and challenges to each approach. Recognizing the academic and social-emotional benefits of single-grade classrooms, the group decided to move forward with that approach.

I am pleased to share that both teachers and administrators are seeing the benefits of this change. Jane LaFata and Susan Holt, lead teachers for First and Second grades respectively, have noted that having more time with a single grade has allowed for a strong and direct approach to academic and social-emotional learning. Instead of moving across classrooms for core subjects (the mixed grade classrooms split into single-grade groups for math), teachers and students can better weave classroom subjects into the whole of their classroom community learning experience, and teachers are able to know their students fully as learners. Despite the change to single grades, we continue to consider these two formative years as the "Primary" program, with shared experiences between the two classrooms, and close attention to literacy development across the two year span.

Susan and Jane look forward to building on the structures and experiences they have designed this year as Second and First grade teachers, cultivating the curriculum they have created with Susan continuing to teach Second Grade and Jane continuing to teach First Grade next year. Jane and Susan are excited to deepen their roots in these classes and have the opportunity to teach each child in the PMFS community as s/he rises through the grades here. Jane, Susan, and our administrators will continue to look for opportunities to integrate learning across the Primary classrooms. In Primary and across grades and subjects, we will continue to explore elements and approaches that engage the strengths and collaborative power of our faculty, to create the absolute best experience for our students.

Please contact me if you would like to talk further. I welcome the chance to meet with you, to share more about our ideas and goals for this work and to hear your thoughts.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sarah Eweney-Denham".

Head of School