

Great Oaks Elementary  
*A Community of Learners*

August 25, 2009

Dear Parent Partners,

Welcome to Great Oaks Elementary for a new school year. We had fun seeing old friends and meeting new friends at the back-to-school events last week. There are many reasons to celebrate as we return to school. For the fourth year in a row, the Texas Education Agency has awarded Great Oaks Elementary an "Exemplary" rating. Congratulations to the entire Great Oaks community for this accomplishment!

We are also celebrating the addition of new staff members. We have added a new teacher to our third grade team. Mrs. Jean Chiriboga has worked at Great Oaks for many years in a variety of positions. We are thrilled that she has joined the professional teaching staff.

Maria Rivera has joined us as a part-time counselor. Mrs. Rivera is a wonderful addition to our counseling team. She has years of experience, and she loves children and our school.

We have a new Parent Support Specialist, Tekita Coffey. Mrs. Coffey previously served as a PSS at Stony Point High School and Ridgeview Middle School. I know you will enjoy working with her.

Teresa Eells and Tracy Burson have joined the staff as educational teaching assistants. Both Mrs. Eells and Mrs. Burson have worked at the school in other positions for many years. Pictures of all of our staff are displayed in the main hallway (Gecko Way) to help you put names with faces. The complete staff list with contact information is on our school website.

Our focus this year is enrichment. We want all students to have opportunities to develop their talents, participate in enriching activities, and connect learning to real world situations. Enrichment can involve service learning projects like recycling, gardening, school leadership, and community outreach. Enrichment can also be independent research based on student interest. Some enrichment opportunities will be high-tech like robotics, some will be more centered on creative arts like music, visual arts, and drama, while some may have a math or science focus. To ensure that all students are participating, students will be working on enrichment projects every Friday for the first hour of the day. There will be many opportunities for parents and community experts to get involved with our enrichment initiative, so watch for more information from your child's teacher.

Mark your calendars for the upcoming Parent Information Nights on September 1 (K-2nd) and September 3 (3<sup>rd</sup> -5<sup>th</sup>). These meetings are designed to help parents become more informed about the specific curricula and expectations for each grade level. Each evening will begin with a brief welcome from our outstanding PTA. I encourage all parents to attend a Parent Information Night and to join the PTA. Our PTA is a dynamic organization focused on serving families.

In addition to personal meetings and conferences, we will continue to communicate important news and information to you through E-mail and on the school website. Please make sure that you have provided a current E-mail address to your teacher for our database. Also, check our website regularly for *Wednesday E-Folder* postings, monthly *Gecko News*, reminders, a calendar of events, and other important information.

The office staff and administrative team want to make the beginning of the school year a smooth transition for you and your child. If we can help you in any way, please let us know.

Sincerely,  
Jana Stowe, Principal