

Neighbor Notes

News and Updates from Freire Charter School

August 25, 2015

Dear Midtown Brandywine Neighbors,

It's been an exciting time here at Freire Charter School as we prepare to launch our school year, and we wanted to take a moment to keep you all updated on our corner of the neighborhood. We know that being a good neighbor takes a lot of hard work, and at the center of that work is open communication and strong relationships.

In this newsletter, you'll find the latest on our transportation plan as well as snippets from neighbors who helped out at our summer clinics which took place from August 10th – August 13th.

In addition to the updates, we also wanted to give a broader invitation to come say hello and meet with us. At our core, we believe that the foundation of both schools and communities is relationships, and we want continue to build that by getting to know

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Neighbors weigh in on their time with Freire students (pages 3-4)

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The latest on how Freire is working to minimize traffic in MTB (pages 5-7)

more of you. Whether that means arranging a time or just a quick chat while you're walking your dog (and is there a neighborhood in Delaware with more dog lovers?) we'd love to hear from you.

And really that means everyone – from our biggest supporters to those with much deeper concerns. It's only by hearing from you that we'll start our year knowing what's working and developing the right habits. So say hello if you see us or to arrange something more formal, feel free to email paul.ramirez@freirecharterschool.org and we'll find a time to sit down.

Here's to a great school year. Your neighbors at Freire,

Paul Ramirez
Head of Academics

Felicia Wenell
Head of Academic Supports

A large group of children's drawings and cards arranged on a floor, centered around the text "I WANT FREIRE TO BE...". The cards contain various words and phrases related to education, such as "Fun", "Safe", "Creative", "Supportive", "Secure", "Inspiring", "Your Future", "A Place That Prepares Me For College And Life Now!", "A Safe Place To Learn", "The Best Place To Learn", "Interesting", "I Want Freire To Help Me...", "I Want Freire To Be Trustful", "Supportive & Secure".

To kick things off at Freire, we always have our new incoming students take part in summer clinic. These are two days for 8th grade and two days for 9th grade where students come to school and participate in sessions to get to know our staff, our culture, and one another. This year, summer clinic was from August 10th – 13th for full days with all our transportation systems running (including parent drop-offs, school buses, and DART buses).

A group of people are seated in a classroom-like setting, facing a whiteboard and large windows. The whiteboard has text on it, and the room has large windows with blinds. The people are seated in rows, and the room appears to be a meeting or training space.

Their thoughts are on the next page,
and we look forward to more collaboration
with the neighborhood in the future!

Notes from Neighbors at Summer Clinic

From neighbor Laura Bolen:

“I was honored to spend some time in Mr. Joe’s shiny new classroom, with Freire’s very first eighth graders in Wilmington for summer clinic. After getting over my initial shock that such an awesome program exists to introduce students to the 'Freire Way,' I was really impressed. From the structure of the day, to the inclusion of our 'In the Neighborhood' session, the Clinic set expectations and laid the foundation for an extremely positive, respectful learning environment. All this before orientation! It feels like a great start--and not just any ordinary school.

“It was eye opening to hear the kids describe what they’d like in a neighborhood, realizing it’s all we want too. In fact, we **are** the neighborhood these kids described: safe, clean, respectful. We look out for each other, and protect each other and our property. I think we can depend on Freire students, families and staff to join us in making MTB great.”

From neighbor Claire Ford:

“As I was coming back from the grocery store last weekend and unloading my car with groceries, a group of kids was coming up the street. As they passed me one of the boys asked if I needed help. I thanked him but said I had it and I then heard one of the girls tell the others that I had been at her school.

“SHE WAS A FREIRE STUDENT! And she recognized me because I was in the 8th grade summer clinics welcoming them to the neighborhood. As we were chatting, a neighbor came out of her house and the girl (“M”) recognized her from the introductory video we made as well!

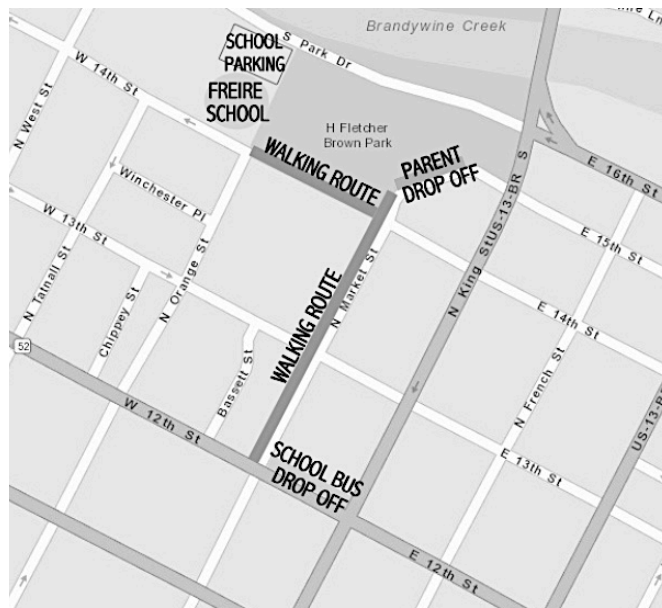
“The other girls weren’t going to Freire and wondered what the school was about (among other things “M” told them that it was a fresh start where no one knows you and you don’t get hassled); I asked where she was planning on going to college (Temple) and how she liked the school (“Good but it’s so plain. They need posters on the walls or something.”)

“It was a great conversation that wouldn’t have happened without our welcome video and being there in session! Thank you to Freire for helping us develop this relationship with the school and with the students!”

Transportation Updates

As we've been gearing up for this school year, a top priority for us at Freire has been listening to concerns and trying to be a good neighbor by making sure we have a transportation plan that minimizes traffic in the Midtown Brandywine neighborhood. During summer clinic we were able to test this plan out with good results (on a smaller scale with 8th and 9th graders coming on different days). Here are the details:

Getting To and From School



Private Transportation

All students who are dropped off at school by a parent or guardian must use the loading zones on Market Street between 14th and 15th Street. During the school year, about 15% of students have indicated they will be driven to school.

School Bus Transportation

School buses drop off and pick up on 12th Street between Market and King streets. Students then walk first along Market Street to E 14th Street and then walk through the park to enter

the school. No students are permitted to walk along N Orange Street to go from the bus to the school. About 50% of students indicated they will be taking school buses.

DART Public Transportation

About 30% of our students have indicated they will be taking DART transportation. For students taking DART transportation, the majority use stops at Rodney Square. To get to the school, they will then proceed up along Market Street and then through the park to the school entrance. Less than ten students have said they will be using DART buses that require them to walk through the neighborhood (eg. Washington & 14th Street, or West & 11th Street).

Walking

Only a very few number of students, less than five total, have indicated that they will be walking to the school.

Special Event Parking

Throughout the year, for parent nights or any other nights that might require additional parking to accommodate all of our families, our friends at Colonial Parking have agreed to allow our families the use of the parking garage at 1201 N Market, which will be free for parents and is just a short walk to our school. Colonial and the school are covering the costs of this parking. No parents will be permitted to park in the neighborhood for these special events.

How did it go? And where do we go from here?

From our perspective, things overall went smoothly during summer clinic with students walking along appropriate routes on Market and through the park, and traffic through the

neighborhood being minimal. Staff were also on hand to supervise pick up and drop off, and more importantly students were able to start their first classes at Freire!

It wasn't without room to grow—on any given afternoon there were a handful of parents who went to drop off or pick up a student in front of the school on 14th Street. At those times, staff were on hand to touch base with those parents and let them know the appropriate pick up and drop off location. (We noted as well that there are likely to be more parents driving students rather than taking the bus in the first couple days of school).

Moving forward, we want to continue to build the right habits for transportation and make sure that we're listening to concerns and being good neighbors. Indeed, we'd love to invite your help during the first week of school from August 31st to September 3rd to welcome students and make sure traffic is running smoothly (we'll even give you a free Freire t-shirt). If you're interested, send an email to paul.ramirez@freirecharterschool.org. Now and throughout the year we look forward to your help—both in making sure our systems are effective as well as volunteering in other ways—so we can together continue the work of providing a great education for Delaware's children.