



September 2009

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the 2009-2010 school year! I hope that your summer has been restful and enjoyable and that you and your child are eagerly anticipating the start of an exciting school year.

I have a few staffing changes to announce for the upcoming school year. We have two new teachers that will be joining our team at Walnut Street. **Mr. Styles** will be working as our new Math teacher, and **Mrs. Gatti** will be working as our new part-time Basic Skills and S.T.E.P.P. teacher. Additionally, **Mrs. Zacher** will be joining us on a full-time basis. I am confident that these teachers will do a wonderful job.

I just received some terrific news from the New Jersey Department of Education. Our students' scores on the 2009 NJ ASK **improved significantly** over their performance on the 2008 assessment. As a result, our school has been identified as making AYP (Annual Yearly Progress) for the 2008 – 2009 school year. This would not have been possible without the hard work of our teachers, students, and parents!

To provide our students with even greater opportunities for academic success, teachers and administrators worked collaboratively at the end of our last school year as well as over the summer to revise our course offerings. This year, all of our students will benefit from new **Skill Development** courses. In these courses, our teachers will systematically present detailed lessons correlated specifically with New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards in the areas of Math, Reading, Writing, and, for our 8th graders, Science. Our Skill Development teachers will then have their students log in to **Study Island** – a web-based, instructional and diagnostic tool – to assess student achievement. We believe that this pedagogical approach will provide our Skill Development teachers with an opportunity to use real data on a constant basis to improve their students' understanding of a myriad of topics.

Our Skill Development teachers have expressed that they would like to program Study Island so that it will email individualized weekly progress reports to our parents. We realize that our students excel and grow the most when teachers and parents work together. Because Study Island is web-based, this type of communication will help you in knowing what you can work on with your son or daughter at home. Please make sure to provide our school with your **email address** in the paperwork that you complete at the beginning of the year.

A second change in our course offerings this year is reflected in our 9th period schedule. Monday through Thursday, our students are scheduled to take **Math ASK Prep courses**. We have been able to do this while keeping our exceptional 9th period Music program in place. Students will be scheduled for a Math ASK Prep course based upon their availability. For example, a student who has Chorus 9th period on Tuesday would have a Math ASK Prep course that meets on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday. All of our Math ASK Prep courses are grade level specific.