

The First Interview

By Jean Follmer



Fall 2008 Kindergarteners Caroline Sween (Lafayette), Mac Follmer (Springhill) and Peter Husch (Lafayette) Photo Jean Follmer

Interviews start early around here! No longer reserved for the private schools, some of our Lamorinda public schools have begun offering an optional Early Kindergarten Interview to their incoming students. Jeannie Pitney, a Springhill Reading Specialist, said “The purpose of the interview is to gather a very beginning sense of how we can group our new kindergarteners into balanced classes.”

The Early Kindergarten Interview process was established last year at Springhill and “the feedback about the interview process from the kindergarten teaching team this year has been very positive.” The interview lasts approximately 10-15 minutes and allows the kindergarten team to get a snapshot of each child in a classroom setting. The children “have the opportunity to draw a picture and write his/her name.” There are also “a few activities that relate to early literacy and math.” The interview “is not a readiness screening.” Readiness and development questions should be addressed with your child’s preschool teacher and/or pediatrician.

Lafayette Elementary began offering the interview this year and parent Lisa Sween said her daughter Caroline “was really eager to go through the process and seemed happy when she came out of the room.” Lafayette parent Karin Husch said her son Peter “told me the

teachers asked him to draw a picture of himself and write his name. Then I believe they asked him some questions about the alphabet and numbers.” Incoming Springhill kindergartener Mac Follmer reflected on his interview saying “I like it that they do ABC’s and stuff and I know that stuff. Miss Leona’s been getting us ready for kindergarten.” Miss Leona is Caroline, Peter and Mac’s pre-K teacher at Joyful Beginnings Preschool in Lafayette.

Balanced classes benefit the teachers and students in many ways and kindergarten is the only grade in which this isn’t easily accomplished. After kindergarten, balanced classrooms can be more easily achieved simply because the teachers and administrators already have some information about the students. They’ve seen them perform academically, they know their respective personalities and where their strengths and weaknesses lie. Having a balance of academic aptitude, personalities, gender and number of students helps the teachers know what to expect in the classroom and saves them some time in the beginning of the year. Jeannie Pitney said, “We had great participation for the 2008 Early Kindergarten Interviews. The parent support validated our efforts in building a foundation for balanced classes.”