To Buffett Parents of Students in Grades 5-7:

We are excited to introduce the concept of **"LOOPING**" at Alice Buffett Magnet Middle School beginning next year. Looping refers to the practice of keeping groups of students together for two years with the same teacher. With Looping, a teacher can implement a more coherent instructional plan appropriate to the child's development. It is a simple concept that at first might sound complicated.

At Buffett during the 2007-2008 school year the following will occur:

- Current grade 5 students will move as a group with their teachers to grade 6.
- Current grade 7 students will move as a group with their teachers to grade 8.
- The teachers currently teaching sixth grade will become fifth grade teachers and work with our new in-coming students at that level.
- The teachers currently teaching eighth grade will become seventh grade Teachers and will be teaching our current grade six students.

The Research On Looping

Extensive research exists on the benefits of looping and indicates that looping has several advantages for both students and teachers. Cited below are some of the salient research studies.

ACADEMIC BENEFITS

Teachers gain extra teaching time. "Getting-to-know-you" time becomes virtually unnecessary during the second year. Teachers don't lose several weeks each September learning a new set of names, teaching the basic rules to a new set of students, figuring out exactly what they learned the previous year. (Ratzki, 1998).

Teacher knowledge about a child's intellectual strengths and weaknesses increases in a way that is impossible to achieve in a single year. (Jacoby, 2004).

Long term teacher/student relationships improve student performance. Program consistency is a contributing factor. (George, 1987).

Multi-year teaching offers tremendous possibilities for summertime learning, such as summer reading lists, mini-projects, and field trips. (Killough, 1996)

SOCIAL ADVANTAGES

Students have reduced apprehension about the new school year and the new teacher. (Hanson, 1995).

Students reap benefits from time spent on developing social skills and cooperative group strategies in subsequent years. (Hanson, 1995).

Looping permits students to get to know one another well, facilitating social construction of knowledge. Students are better able to resolve conflicts and they are more skillful in working as team members to solve problems. (Hanson, 1995).

Long term relationships result in an emotional and intellectual climate that encourages thinking, risk-taking, and involvement. (Marzano, 2002).

Looping encourages a stronger sense of community and family among parents, students, and teachers. (Checkley, 1995).

Parents embrace looping once they understand its benefits. (Grant, et.al., 1996)

COMMONLY ASKED PARENT QUESTIONS

Q. Can a placement be changed if my child has a personality conflict with the teacher?

A. Beginning a looping program at Buffett is easier than at most schools. Teachers at Buffett are not only enthused about working with the same students for two years they are also planning now for next years curriculum and student needs. Teachers prior commitment to looping allows for low-key and low-impact implementation. Additionally, multi-year teaming actually improves teaching because of the increased familiarity.

   Teachers also have a higher level of commitment in problem solving any personality issues, because the student/teacher relationship is for two years not just to the end of the semester. In addition, we have balanced our teams based on teacher strengths, teaming our newer teachers with more experienced teachers. If all else fails, and a parent, teacher, or student is still dissatisfied, the rare option always exists to move that student to another placement the following year.

COMMONLY ASKED STUDENT QUESTIONS

Q. What if I get a teacher I am not comfortable with?

A. Two-year assignments are an incentive for teachers to try harder to reach kids. In a two year assignment, dealing with personality clashes immediately and with total commitment is a priority.

This can mean a variety of instructional strategies that Buffett teachers have implemented. Currently, Buffett teachers utilize reciprocal teaching, combination notemaking, vocabulary development using the Frayer model and word walls, writing and technology across the curriculum, cooperative learning, differentiation of lessons, centers, shared inquiry, and the universal skills of corrective teaching and reteaching.

A teacher can sit down with the student and discuss the problems he or she is having. Conferencing about successful approaches is another possibility. Including parents in the dialogue also helps. Long-term conflict will be avoided.

We believe all students benefit from their relationship with the teacher. Looping is about many things, but mostly it is about long-term relationships between teachers, students, and parents, and about an intimate relationship with the curriculum. We want you to know that your child is our number one priority. Looping is just one more method to ensure a rigorous academic program in a caring and nurturing environment.

For more information about Looping, please contact the Principal, Dr. ReNae Kehrberg (561-6160). We have created an extensive 13 page brochure on the topic for any parent that is interested. It is available in the school office, or upon request, will be sent home with your student. **We are pleased to have your student at Buffett!**