 Dear Third Grade Family,

My name is Brandon Rutherford and I will be your child’s third grade gifted teacher at Garden Hills for the 2013-2014 school year. I already know many of you well, but I wanted to take this opportunity to reiterate how privileged I feel to teach such a wonderful group of students. I have followed this year’s class of third graders since beginning my career at Garden Hills and though it’s meant moving grade levels 3 times, I am very glad that I now get to participate directly in their growth. Teaching is my life and I pledge to do my very best to ensure that your child is supported academically, socially and emotionally while at Garden Hills.

I know that personal and academic growth happens within the context of a person’s culture, community and family. I wish to learn about your family and build a relationship with your child. To share a little bit about myself, I’m 33 and am happily married with a one year old daughter, a dog and 2 reef aquarium systems. I grew up locally and have lived in various areas of Champaign and Urbana most of my life. I have both a bachelor’s degree in biology and my master’s degree plus 60 credit hours in curriculum and instruction from the University of Illinois. Before working at Unit 4, I spent 10 years as a martial arts instructor for children and have worked in a variety of jobs such as a ditch digger, corn detasseler, baker and bank teller. I am very interested in literature, science, and engineering, three disciplines I hope to integrate into much of my curriculum this year.

As a public servant, my job is to cater the needs of students and their parents. I consider you, as the caregiver of my student, to be a professional colleague. Your influence on their learning is equally as important as mine and thus I will always share my instructional decisions with you and listen to your suggestions and feedback as the year progresses. I have created a class website that will document both your student’s work and all relevant information pertaining to curriculum and policies of our class. The URL for our website is: mrrutherfordisawesome.weebly.com. Please check this site on at least a weekly basis so you can be aware of all of the important things that our class is doing. Your child will also create a website of their own that will showcase their work. Of course, student websites will be fully confidential and password protected.

In addition to using our class website, I hope to also communicate with you in person when you come to school and by email and phone on at least a bi-monthly basis. I know that your child’s growth is very important to you and I will be sure to regularly inform you of their growth and make you aware of any issues that need to be addressed. Please know that I’m thinking about school literally all of the time and I welcome calls to my cell phone: 217 714-3801. It is perfectly appropriate to call me any time between the hours of 6am and 9pm for routine matters such as homework questions.

Attached to this letter is a manual outlining some of the policies and methodologies I will use to create a positive classroom environment. This manual, letter, and everything else I send home is also available on our class website.

I greatly look forward to sharing this year with you and your family.

Your teacher,

Brandon Rutherford