

*RITCHIE PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
1514 DUNSTER ROAD  
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20854  
301-279-8475*

**PARENT HANDBOOK  
2008-2009**

August, 2008

Dear Ritchie Park Parents,

This handbook provides essential information regarding school procedures. I hope it will be a valuable reference to make the school year run smoothly and productively. If you have any further questions, please feel free to call the school. On behalf of the entire staff, I look forward to working with you and your children during the 2008-09 school year.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Dougherty  
Principal

# ***RITCHIE PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL***

## **SCHOOL HOURS**

8:00-4:30	-	Office Hours
8:50-3:05	-	Grades Kdg.-5

## **LUNCH AND RECESS HOURS**

	<b><u>LUNCH</u></b>	<b><u>RECESS</u></b>
Grade K	11:20-11:55	12:40-1:10
Grade 3	11:25-11:55	12:00-12:30
Grades 1 & 2	12:00-12:30	12:30-1:00
	<b><u>RECESS</u></b>	<b><u>LUNCH</u></b>
Grades 4 & 5	12:00-12:30	12:35-1:05

## **ABSENCES**

**Parents should call the school when a child will be absent.** Parents may leave messages about absent students on the school's answering machine when the school office is closed. Please leave your child's name, his/her teacher, and the reason for the absence when you call. Upon returning to school after being absent, students are to bring a note from their parents explaining the absence. When children have been absent because of a serious or contagious illness, please check with your doctor before having your child return.

If possible, avoid scheduling medical appointments during the school day. Students leaving school for any reason should be signed out at the office.

Arrangements for withdrawing children from school for traveling, visiting, or vacationing purposes should be made through the principal.

## **BUSES**

Approximately three fourths of the Ritchie Park students are bused to school. Students are picked up at designated bus stops no more than one mile from their home. Parents are responsible for maintaining discipline and safety at bus stops. Inclement weather, traffic accidents, and road construction can cause delays in the bus routes, so pick-up and drop-off times of each bus may vary somewhat from day to day. Questions about the buses or bus routes should be directed to the Shady Grove Depot at 301-670-8271.

## **CHECK IN AT OFFICE**

All visitors to the school - parents, grandparents, volunteers, **everyone** - must check in at the main office before going anywhere else in the building. All visitors and volunteers must wear identification badges in the school building.

## **DAY CARE**

“Bar-T” will offer a before and after school daycare program called “Kids Club” at Ritchie Park. The before school (7:00 a.m.-8:45 a.m.) and after school program (3:05-6:30 p.m.) is for children, grades K-5. “Kids Club” will also meet on early release days (12:35-6:30 p.m.) For more information, please contact Bar-T at 301-938-3172 or visit their website at [www.bar-t.com](http://www.bar-t.com).

## **DELAYED OPENING DAYS**

During inclement weather, stay tuned to the radio or television to get updated information regarding weather related schedule changes. On delayed opening days, students will have lunch at their regularly scheduled times, but will have no recess.

## **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

A copy of the Behavior Guidelines and School Discipline Policy will be sent home with students in September. Parents are asked to read and discuss this policy with their child so that students can continue to work in a safe, comfortable school environment. Parents and students will be required to sign and date the BLUE response sheet and return it to school by the due date.

## **DROPPING STUDENTS OFF AT SCHOOL**

Parents who drive their children to school are asked to drop off their children in the "drop off circle" next to the bus circle or park in the side parking lot or on the street and walk their students to the front door. No cars will be permitted in the driveway entrance to the bus circle during arrival (8:25am–8:50am) and dismissal (2:55pm–3:25pm) times for obvious safety reasons. Please adhere to all signs posted.

## **EARLY DISMISSALS**

School is occasionally dismissed early due to adverse weather conditions or mechanical failure (lack of electricity or water) at the school. Students should know where they are to go without having to call home if school is dismissed early for any reason. Early dismissals are announced on local media stations. Planned early release days for professional meetings and conferences are listed in the school calendar. Please plan in advance for these days.

## **ENROLLING STUDENTS**

New students are enrolled by having their parents complete enrollment forms at the school office. Immunization information, birth certificates, and proof of residency for all students new to Ritchie Park must be on file at the school before the children can attend school.

## **EMERGENCY CLOSINGS**

School is occasionally closed all day due to unsafe weather conditions or mechanical problems in schools. Announcements are made over local radio or television stations during the mornings of unscheduled closings; please do not call the school for this information. Emergency closings are also announced on the MCPS information line at 301-279-3673.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

When a field trip is scheduled, each student who is to participate will bring home a permission form giving the date of the trip and the destination. The form must be signed by a parent or guardian and returned to the teacher before the student is allowed to go on the trip. There will be a fee charged for most, if not all field trips. Students must pay for the field trip prior to the date of the trip. If there is a financial concern, please contact Mrs. Dougherty by note or telephone.

## **HALF-DAY SESSIONS (EARLY RELEASE DAYS)**

When school is scheduled for a half-day session, all students in grades K-5 will be dismissed at **12:35 p.m.** Buses will follow their routes beginning at 12:35. Parents who wish to have their children dismissed before 12:35 must send a note to the teacher. Lunch will be served for those students who want to eat at school.

## **HEALTH AND ACCIDENT NEEDS**

A health technician is on duty from 9:00 to 3:30 each school day. First aid for minor injuries is administered in the health room. When a serious injury occurs, parents are notified immediately and the rescue squad may be called.

All students should have on file in the office an emergency number to contact in case parents may not be available in the event that a child really needs to be sent home due to illness. These numbers need to be updated as jobs change and neighbors or friends you may have indicated move or go back to work. Please be sure to update your numbers if it is needed. When we have a child in the health room who complains of pain or sick stomach, we routinely check their temperature. If they are running a temperature, we contact the parents. If a child complains of being ill or has a headache and no temperature, the rule of thumb is to let them rest for ten or fifteen minutes and send them back to class with the understanding that if the pain or illness persists, they are to come back to the health room and we will try to contact their parents.

Please do not ask the office to keep a sick child in the health room the rest of the day. That is not good for the child or other students who may need to use the area temporarily. The times when you cannot pick up your sick child yourself are the times when an emergency contact is most valuable.

We also find many times a parent will tell a child to "have the nurse" look at a cut or sprain. There is no regularly assigned nurse at our school. A part-time health technician or one of the school secretaries attend to all health emergencies as outlined above. A public health nurse is assigned to Ritchie Park one half day a week to verify immunizations and other forms and to advise teachers and parents of services available at the local health clinic.

Please be alert to your child's health and decide when it is best to send him/her to school. Keeping a sick child at home benefits your child as well as other children. Please note that if a child is sent home sick, he/she will not be allowed to return to school that day to participate in school sponsored clubs/activities that take place after school.

## **LOST AND FOUND**

A lost and found area is located in the All Purpose room for items that have been misplaced by students. Clothing and lunch boxes should be labeled clearly with your child's name, as many items are very similar in appearance.

## **LUNCH PRICES**

Elementary lunch = \$2.40	Breakfast = \$1.30	Milk = \$.60
Reduced price lunch = \$.40	Reduced price breakfast = \$.30	

## **LUNCH AND RECESS**

Students have 30 minute lunch periods and 30 minute recess periods each day except for early release or delayed opening days. Students will have recess outdoors unless it is raining or the temperature is below 32 degrees F. They should dress accordingly when the weather is windy or cold; all students are expected to go outside on "outdoor recess" days.

## **MEDICATIONS**

Parents are encouraged to administer medications to their children at home whenever possible. No medications will be administered in school or during school-sponsored activities without written authorization from the parent/guardian and a physician's written order. Any prescribed medication that needs to be administered at school must be in the original bottle and must be accompanied by MCPS form 525-13 (Authorization to Administer Prescribed Medication.) All medications must be hand delivered to the school by a parent; under no circumstances will school personnel administer medications brought to school by a student. Over-the-counter medications must be accompanied by a physician's note to be administered by the health technician. Please do not send cough drops, throat drops, vitamins, aspirin, tylenol, etc., to school with your child.

## **OFFICE HOURS**

The school office is open from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. each school day. An answering machine will take messages during non-school hours.

## **PARENT NEWSLETTER AND COMMUNICATIONS**

The **Principal's Newsletter** will be sent home with students every other Friday and will contain important information, reminders, and notices. Please watch for the gold newsletter in order to stay informed.

## **PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

It is extremely important that open lines of communications be maintained between home and school. The best method for communication is through the parent-teacher conferences. At least one parent-teacher conference will be held during the first semester of school to discuss each student's academic progress. Conferences are encouraged and can be initiated by teachers, parents, or the principal. Tuesdays are reserved for staff meetings so conferences should be arranged after 3:05 p.m. on other days. The initial contact to discuss concerns or problems should be with the child's teacher. Most concerns and problems can be resolved at this point.

## **PICKING STUDENTS UP FROM SCHOOL**

Once students have arrived at school, they will be released only to their parents or legal guardians; all students leaving school before the end of the school day must be signed out in the office by their parents. If parents want their child to be picked at school by anyone else, including siblings and grandparents, the parents must send a note to the school stating their wishes and the name of the person who will pick up the child. The person picking up the child should bring picture identification with them to the school office.

## **PLAY DATES**

If your child has a "play date" after school and will be accompanying another student home, you **MUST** write the teacher a note giving written authorization for this to occur. Because of the overcrowding on some buses, it will not be possible to use school transportation to transport your child and a friend home unless they usually ride the same bus. Please insure your own transportation for this purpose. Your cooperation with these procedures will help insure the whereabouts and safety of all our children.

## **PTA MEETINGS**

PTA activities are scheduled periodically throughout the year and provide opportunities for families to come together at the school for information, entertainment, and/or socialization. PTA business meetings are scheduled for the first Tuesday evening of each month. The meetings are held at the school and all parents are welcome to attend PTA meetings and activities.

## **REPORT CARDS**

Report cards are distributed four times a year, at the end of each of the nine-week grading periods. The report cards are sent home with students in November, February, and April, and they are mailed home in June. Kindergarten students will receive report cards twice, once in January at the end of the first semester and once in June at the end of the school year.

## **SAFETY PATROLS**

Student safety patrols are assigned to each school bus and to selected street corners. The purpose of patrols is to set an example for safe behavior and to guide and assist students in boarding and getting off buses safely and to cross the street. Patrols are not expected to act as policepersons or to take any type of disciplinary action with students. Unsafe practices or unsafe conditions are reported to the safety patrol teacher sponsor.

## **STUDENTS WHO BECOME ILL AT SCHOOL**

Ritchie Park has a Health Room located in the main office area. Students who become ill at school may be picked up in the Health Room and should be signed out in the main office. Students who have purchased lunch and who leave before lunch should contact the cafeteria before they leave school that day.

## **SCHOOL HOURS**

The school day for students is 8:50 a.m. to 3:05 p.m. Students should plan to arrive at school between 8:30 and 8:45. The first bells rings at 8:45 signaling students to enter the building and report to their classrooms. **Our instructional day begins at 8:50. Your child will be reported as “tardy” if he/she arrives in the classroom after 8:50. Please make every effort to insure that your child arrives at school between 8:30 and 8:45.**

## **TARDIES/SIGNING STUDENTS IN LATE**

Students arriving late must stop in the main office to sign in and receive a “tardy slip.” Parents who sign their children in late are asked not to walk their children to the classrooms to help them unpack as this can be disruptive to the teacher and other students who have already started the instructional day.