

Ritchie Park Elementary School
Principal's Newsletter

Bonnie Dougherty, Principal
Wanda Coates, Assistant Principal

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Dear Parents and Families,

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Note from Mrs. Dougherty:

My heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the PTA and members of the Fond Farewell Committee. The reception on Tuesday was so meaningful and special and will provide a lifetime of memories of my years with all of you at Ritchie Park. I will treasure the scrapbook, notes, pictures....and of course the honor of having the Media Center bear my name. It has been a privilege to be a part of your childrens' lives and I hope that they have learned as much from me as I from them. My warmest wishes to all of you ...and thank you again for an incredible 14 years.

Instructional Program

Building Vocabulary at Home

Who was your child's first vocabulary teacher? You, of course! Since infancy, you have talked to your son or daughter, using body language and facial expressions to give meaning to your words. Well, nothing has changed! You still have the power to significantly increase your child's understanding of the English language, in both oral and written form. Following these few suggestions should help your child's listening, speaking, writing and reading word knowledge explode, while creating opportunities for quality time together.

- Continue to read to your child from books that are beyond his or her “just right” reading level. By doing so, you are providing opportunities for your child to hear rich language that is not used in everyday conversation. How many of you enjoy listening to books on tape? Our students certainly are not too old to be read to on a regular basis at home.
- Encourage independent reading time and limit television time.
- When speaking to your child, use vocabulary you want him or her to employ in conversation; for example, *minute* could replace *teeny tiny*. Use words that have different “degrees” of intensity (voracious vs. hungry) and explain in an offhand manner why you chose the specific word you used.
- Encourage your child to ask you what words mean when he or she is reading or listening to someone speak. Explain the meaning and use the word in a sentence that shows the meaning. Do not ask your child to look the word up in the dictionary. If you don’t know the meaning, look it up yourself in front of your child and share the definition in child friendly terms. Let your child be infected by the “Word Meaning Bug”...the need to know what a word means and how it is used in speaking and writing.
- Play word games as a family: Charades, Scrabble, Pictionary, Boggle and many others or give gifts of word puzzle books and do them with your child: crosswords, word ladders, word pyramids
- Incorporate the words you and your child discover together into your everyday conversation, so your child has multiple encounters with each new word. You could have a sound, phrase or body motion that is shared each time a new word is used by anyone in the family anytime during the day... “DING...DING...DING... you just used _____!” or “Kiss your brain! You just used ____ in a sentence!”

School Improvement Team Meeting Next Week

The SIT team at Ritchie Park will be holding its first meeting next Tuesday, October 27, 2009 from 3:20 to 4:30 in the conference room. The SIT is comprised of teachers, support staff, and parents. We welcome additional parent representatives to attend these meetings. Our future meetings will be held on **January 26, 2010, and March 23, 2010**. If you would like to attend any or all of these meetings, please call the office and inform Mrs. Baum or Ms. Zegarra. Our SIP (School Improvement Plan) will be posted on the Ritchie Park website in the near future.

Feasibility Study at Ritchie Park

There will be one final feasibility study meeting this year with Ms. Adrienne Karamihas next Wednesday, October 28th at 4:00 in the Media Center. During this meeting Mrs. Karamihas will present her plan regarding the number of rooms and other features in the proposed addition for Ritchie Park. Please consider joining us at this final meeting.

Kindergarten Literacy Night Scheduled for November 4, 2009

Save the date! The kindergarten team, along with Ms. Lonni Millman, our Reading Specialist, will present Kindergarten Literacy Night from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm in Mrs. Hershey's room. This event will be an opportunity for you to learn more about the Language Arts and Writing Curriculum for Kindergarten. Information will also be provided about guided reading groups. We hope to see many kindergarten parents there.

Additional Volunteer Training Sessions Scheduled

ALL parents, relatives, and community members who would like to volunteer at Ritchie Park **must** attend a half hour training session. Two additional sessions for **October 27th at 1:05 p.m.** and **November 3rd at 1:05 p.m.** have been scheduled. If you are unable to make either session, please contact Mrs. Baum and she will arrange for an alternate session. The training will be presented by Mrs. Dougherty, Mrs. Coates, Ms. Jeffcott, and Mrs. Van Essen, PTA volunteer coordinator. The session will include the distribution of materials, a review of important expectations, procedural and allergy information, and useful classroom tips.

NAACP Representative Identified

Thank you to **Mrs. Marquette Heaven** for agreeing to serve as Ritchie Park Elementary School's NAACP representative for the school year. The mission of the NAACP Parent Council is to provide a forum through which interested citizens may offer assistance, guidance, and support to minority parents and students of Montgomery County Public Schools using encouragement, information sharing, training, positive motivation, and advocacy as they pursue the highest quality education possible for their children. Mrs. Heaven will act as a liaison between our minority students in the community, the PTA, and school administration.

Student Corner

Student Government Elections Results

Congratulations to the 2009-2010 student council officers:

President: Matthew Chazin

Vice President: Caroline Nesbit

Treasurer: Shylee Yachin

Secretary: Evan Scheinberg

News from the Music Room

Congratulations to the following students who have been selected as the 2010 North County Honors Chorus members:

Isabella Paternostro

Jerry Peng

Samantha Quiros

Mark Tsuma

Way to go students, we are proud of you! We look forward to your future performances.

News from the Media Center

There was much excitement last week when the Star Wars theme “**READ...and the Force is With You**” was announced for our annual Reading Incentive Program. Students have started to read their way to becoming **Jedi Grand Masters**. Those students who read 20 minutes per day every day will successfully reach this goal by the April 30th deadline. Program information is available in the Media Center and on the Ritchie Park webpage under Media Center.

Students in grades 1 through 5 are being introduced to the Black-Eyed Susan Book Award Program this week and next. This is an exciting program sponsored by the Maryland Association of School Librarians (MASL). Participants must read a certain number of the nominated books in order to be able to vote for their favorite. A special part of this program is that only STUDENTS in the state of Maryland get to choose the award winners. There are two categories we are focusing on - Picture Books and Chapter Books (Gr. 4-6). First and second graders are reading the titles through their Media Lessons. Third through fifth graders have the opportunity to work on the books independently and those who qualify to vote (by reading the required number of titles) will participate in a Voting Party in April. Information about this program is also on the Media Center webpage.

For Parents

Homework Hotline Live!

In its 24th year, Homework Hotline Live! Kicked off its season this month to help MCPS students solve the daily dilemmas of homework. Teachers will walk students through those difficult math problems and answer questions about any other subject live on the air on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 5 to 6 p.m. on Comcast Channel 33, Verizon FIOS channel 35, RCN channel 88. Students can call, 301-279-3234 or e-mail HHL@mcpsmd.org to have their questions answered.

Enrichment Opportunities

Reminder

- Applications for the Center Program for the Highly Gifted (HGC) were mailed directly to all parents of Grade 3 students. If you are interested in having your child considered for the Center Program, you must complete the application and **return it by November 9, 2009** to: HGC Application, Division of Consortia Choice and Application Program Services, 11721 Kemp Mill Road, Silver Spring, MD 20902. Students who submit their applications by the deadline will be tested at Ritchie Park. We will inform you of the testing date as soon as we receive it.

SATURDAY SCHOOL OPENS FOR ITS 23RD YEAR!

Making this year the best academic experience for 4,000 students!

Academic support, small class size, certified teachers, affordable for families in Montgomery County. These words describe The George B. Thomas Sr. Learning Academy (GBTLA), a nonprofit organization that operates in 12 high schools from October 3, 2009 to May 1, 2010. Over 2,000 students have already registered for the program. The GBTLA expects that

enrollment will reach 4,000 students this year. For \$30, students can attend 22 Saturday morning classes from 8:30 – 11:30 designed to provide extra attention and support. The 12 centers are located at the following Montgomery County high schools: Montgomery Blair, Albert Einstein, Gaithersburg, John F. Kennedy, Magruder, Northwest, Paint Branch, Rockville, Sherwood, Springbrook, Watkins Mill, and Wheaton.

The GBTLA is the largest mentoring and academic enhancement program in the metropolitan area serving nearly 3,700 students last year. Dr. Thomas, GBTLA's President and Founder, received the 2008 Washingtonian of the Year award for his work in creating this organization. Check the GBTLA Web site at www.gbtlearningacademy.org. For questions or information call 301-320-6545.

Coming Attractions

Halloween

We will be celebrating Halloween with our annual parade and parties next week, on **FRIDAY** afternoon, **October 30**. **The parade will start at 2:00 p.m. with parties beginning around 2:20 p.m.** Students who do not celebrate Halloween will spend the afternoon participating in alternate activities. **Parents who prefer that their children not participate in the costume parade and/or party, should contact their classroom teacher. We welcome all parents to come and enjoy the festivities with their children. Please do not plan on arriving prior to 1:40 to help children change into costumes as classes will be continuing until then.**

As we prepare for Halloween, here are some suggestions which might be helpful. Families are encouraged to select Halloween costumes that depict positive characters and/or those reflecting career choices, occupations, heroes, and literary characters. As you and your children select costumes, we encourage you to avoid characters which reflect violence or horror. Any costume accessories with pointy or sharp edges or simulated dangerous weapons will not be allowed in school. I am requesting that items which may cause harm be left at home. These include such items as toy swords, pitch forks, guns, knives, wands, etc. Any that are brought to school will need to be picked up by parents at the end of the day. Thank you in advance for helping to make this a fun and safe activity for all.

Upcoming Events

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| October 23 | - | PTA Pizza Bingo at St. Raphael's |
| October 26 | - | Individual Student Pictures |
| October 27 | - | Fifth Grade picture |
| | - | School Improvement Team (SIT) Meeting, 3:20 p.m |
| October 30 | - | Halloween Parade and Parties, 2:00 p.m. |

Sincerely,

Bonnie Dougherty
Principal

Wanda Coates
Assistant Principal