

Ritchie Park Elementary School
Principal's Newsletter

Bonnie Dougherty, Principal

Volume XV, No. 3



September 25, 2009

Dear Parents and Families,

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Principal's Newsletter Going Paperless...

In an effort to conserve paper, this will be the last "paper" newsletter you receive unless you request otherwise. The newsletter will be available electronically on the Ritchie Park website. If you require a paper copy, please contact the school office. Thank you for helping us in our efforts to be "green."

Instructional Program

Reading Assessments

Evaluating students' reading skills and reading levels is an on-going process at Ritchie Park and across MCPS. All elementary students will have been assessed on one of two county-wide reading tests by the beginning of October and will be re-tested in the winter and in the spring using the same measures.

Kindergarten, first and second grade students are taking a primary assessment to inform current instruction and measure progress over time. Teachers learn about a student's knowledge of the basics of reading and writing: letter recognition, letter-sound correspondence, and word recognition, as well as how well a student understands the stories he/she can read. This assessment is given in a one on one situation using a palm pilot and leveled reading books and helps teachers group students appropriately for small group instruction.

Students in grades 3 through 5 have taken the MAP-R, a computer – generated multiple choice reading test that is used to track progress over time. It is a nationally normed assessment that lets us know how students perform in comparison to other children in the grade across the country and within our county. The information gained from this test is one of the many pieces of information that teachers use to group their students for small lessons.

Teachers will be ready to share the results of these assessments with parents at conference time in November.

Parent Tips...

Parents can help their children continue to grow as readers in several ways. The single-most important thing a parent can do is read to your child every day, no matter what the child's grade. Reading to your child builds vocabulary, helps to instill a love of reading, and sends a message that reading is an important way to spend time, besides giving him or her some quality time. Another way to encourage a children's understanding of what he/she reads is to talk a lot with your child, using the vocabulary you want them to be able to understand. Encourage your child to ask you what words mean, explain the meaning and then use it in a sentence for your child. You will be surprised how quickly your child's vocabulary and reading skills grow when you incorporate these strategies into your daily routine.

Student Corner

Contest Helps Media Center Cut Down on Overdue Books

Students have settled into the Media Center routines and are doing a good job of returning books and materials on or before the due dates. This past week, a new procedure/contest was initiated that has helped classes in having ZERO overdue books. A contest is held each quarter between homerooms and the class with the LOWEST number of ***overdues*** wins a popsicle party. The data is tracked on a chart behind the circulation desk so students can monitor their progress. Parents can also help by checking the date stamped on the back of library books and making sure those books get into backpacks on or before Media day.

Don't forget that The National Book Festival is happening tomorrow, September 26th from 10:00 AM to 5:30 PM on the National Mall between 3rd and 7th Streets. We hope you have a chance to go and see some of America's finest authors. Information can be found on the Library of Congress website at www.loc.gov/bookfest.

Halloween Young Run

This year's date for the **Halloween Young Run is Sunday, October 18, 2009**. This non-competitive run is for kids 12 and under. The students may sign up to run a ¼ mile, ½ mile, or 1 mile. Registration forms are being passed out during Physical Education class. Online registration is available at www.halloweenyoungrun.com. Due to an oversight, a parental signature line was left off the bottom of the form. Parents please make sure that you sign the form before you mail it in. The deadline to register is Monday, October 12, 2009. Ritchie Park will have a banner for students to sign and their pictures will be taken and displayed in the

gymnasium along with the banner. School participation awards are given to schools that have 20% or more finishers. Hope to see you all there!

For Parents

Flu clinic is coming to Ritchie Park ES

Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services will offer **free, voluntary** seasonal flu vaccinations to all MCPS elementary school students beginning Sept. 23, 2009 through Oct. 23, 2009. Ritchie Park will hold its flu vaccination clinic on Monday, October 5, 2009. Seasonal flu vaccine is **not** the vaccine for H1N1 (swine flu). Information about the H1N1 (swine flu) vaccine will be available later in the fall. **FluMist (nasal vaccine)** is the vaccine that most students will receive in school. It is a gentle spray that is administered in each nostril. It is well tolerated by children and has minimal side effects. Consent forms were sent home with all students on the first day of school. If you would like for your child to receive the **FluMist** and you have not yet sent in the consent form, please return the form to the school office by 3:00 p.m. Tuesday, September 29, 2009. Extra consent forms are available in the school office.

Details of the flu vaccine clinic are as follows:

- 1) Students receiving the vaccine will be given a nametag and lined up in their classrooms.
- 2) A parent volunteer will bring the students from each class who are receiving the vaccine down to the clinic location.
- 3) Students will be supervised and wait in the waiting area until it is their class' turn to enter the clinic.
- 4) FluMist vaccine will be administered to each student.
- 5) A parent volunteer will return students to their classrooms.

The George B. Thomas, Sr. Saturday School Program

The Learning Academy is a tutoring and mentoring program that enhances the academic performance and achievement of Montgomery County students in grades 1 through 12. This program helps children reach their academic potential through small group support in reading, mathematics, and test-taking skills. This year, an additional half-hour of instructional support is being added to every tutoring session. The program runs from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. on Saturday mornings. During this time, certified teachers and volunteer tutors work with students in the areas of reading, language arts, mathematics, and learning/studying strategies. The GBTLA is open to all students who desire to improve or enhance their academic growth and achievement. Centers are located in twelve high schools throughout the County. Students can enroll at any of the twelve centers; however, students typically enroll at the center that is in their home school cluster – in this case, the Rockville High School Center. Once enrolled, students must meet high academic and behavioral expectations, including regular attendance. They are required to share quarterly report cards with tutors, who use the information to plan tutoring activities and monitor student progress. Parents **must** complete a registration form (including student ID number), pay a \$30 registration fee, and provide a copy of their child(ren)'s most recent report card. Registration forms are available in the main office of all cluster schools and online at www.gbtlearningacademy.org. If you have questions about the program, please call the

GBTLA's main office at 301.320.6545. Registration for this year will take place on September 26 from 8:30-11:30 at the chosen learning site and opening day will be on October 3 from 8:30 to 10:00 a.m.

Cafeteria and Playground Rules Attached

I am attaching a list of Cafeteria Rules for Students and Playground Rules for Students to this newsletter and am asking all parents to read and review them with their child(ren). By discussing and insuring that your child understands these regulations, you will be helping to promote safety for all students at Ritchie Park.

Kiss and Ride Circle

All parents using the ***kiss and ride drop off*** are reminded to pull their vehicles all the way around the circle as close to the stop sign as possible before dropping off their children. This will alleviate backups in the circle and improve safety of children exiting vehicles and entering the school. Thank you for your cooperation.

Mandatory Volunteer Training Meetings

ALL parents who would like to volunteer at Ritchie Park must attend a half hour training session. One session will be held prior to our PTA meeting at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 6th and the second session will be announced at a later date. 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, Ms. Jeffcott, Mrs. Coates, and a PTA representative. The session will include the distribution of important expectations, procedural and allergy information, and useful classroom tips.

Coming Attraction

Parent Visitation Day-October 12, 2009

Monday, October 12 is Columbus Day and a holiday for many parents. You are invited to visit the school between **9:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. and 1:15 through 2:15 p.m.** We look forward to seeing many parents since this is a good opportunity to observe our instructional program in action. Visitors are asked to enter the building through the front door, sign in, and obtain a name tag before proceeding to the classroom. **Unfortunately, we do not have the space or supervision for younger brothers and sisters on this day. Therefore, I am respectfully requesting that you not bring siblings to school during this time.** We will be following our normal schedule so this will be a time for quiet observation in the classrooms. Thank you for your cooperation.

Attachments

- ***Cafeteria Rules for Students***
- ***Playground Rules for Students***

Upcoming Events

- September 28 - NO SCHOOL; YOM KIPPUR HOLIDAY
- October 2 - Early Release Day; Students Dismissed at 12:35 p.m.
- October 5 - Flu Clinic
- October 6 - PTA Meeting/Volunteer Training, 7:00 p.m.
- October 12 - Columbus Day-Parent Visitation Day

Sincerely,

Bonnie Dougherty
Principal