

Ritchie Park Elementary School

Principal's Newsletter

Bonnie Dougherty, Principal

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August 2009

Dear Parents and Families,

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Welcome to a New School Year!

Welcome to the 2009-2010 school year! I hope you and your children have had a relaxing summer thus far and are enjoying the remaining weeks before school begins. I'd like to extend a warm welcome to all of you who are new to our school and hope you will become involved in our programs and PTA activities. Please feel free to stop by and/or call to let us know if we can assist in any way to help you and your children become better acquainted with our school and community.

Summer News and Updates...

Family Packet Nights

It has been great seeing many of you at our ***family packet nights*** during the summer and we hope you and your children have found them to be fun and helpful. I'm looking forward to hearing about all the books our students have read, the places they have seen, and the adventures they have had when they return at the end of this month.

New Learning Cottages

We have received two new modular "learning cottages" for the upcoming school year. They are located between the current school building and the other existing portable classroom. Mr. Carbonaro and Ms. Nusbaum, two members of our 4/5 team, will be moving into these new classrooms so that we can keep our upper grade math team together.

Grades 4 and 5 to Continue Same Model for Instruction

We will continue to use the *super team* model for our 4th and 5th grade students. This means that some teachers at these grade levels will teach a 4th grade class in the morning and a 5th grade

class in the afternoon or vice versa. Other teachers will have a 4th grade class in the morning and a 4th grade class in the afternoon while others will have a 5th grade class in the morning and a 5th grade class in the afternoon. What will be the same for all of the teachers at these grade levels is that they will have one class in the morning and a different class in the afternoon. This means that students in 4th and 5th grades will have two teachers this year: a morning teacher and an afternoon teacher. One of these teachers will teach math, social studies and science, while the other will teach reading and writing. This approach will provide the team with more flexibility in programming for our students.

2009-10 Staffing Allocations and Classroom Organization

Last spring we received one additional classroom teaching position to meet the needs of our growing student population. However, our allocations for Art, Music, and Physical Education were decreased from full time to .9 or 4 1/2 days per week. Based on present staffing allocations and student enrollment, our classroom organization for next year will be as follows:

Kindergarten -	4 classes
First Grade -	4 classes
Second Grade -	4 classes
Third Grade -	3 classes
Fourth and Fifth Grades-	6 classes

New Administrator and Staff

I am thrilled to inform you that Wanda Coates, our new assistant principal, joined us on July 1st. Mrs. Coates has been an educator in MCPS for 23 years. Her background and experience include 10 years as an elementary school teacher and team leader, 9 years as a middle school science resource teacher and 5 years as an administrator. As an administrator, Mrs. Coates served as an Assistant Principal at Clopper Mill Elementary, Dufief Elementary, and Diamond Elementary Schools. Additionally, she completed her Principal Internship at Cold Spring Elementary School. I know you and your children will enjoy meeting and working with Mrs. Coates when the new year begins. Two additional staff members will be joining our team for next year. **Ms. Christina Tregoning** will join the Ritchie Park team and fill a .5 (half time) academic intervention position. This will be used to support students in reading and math throughout the grade levels. **Ms. Brenda Howard** will be a new paraeducator at Ritchie Park, having previously worked in that role at Rock Creek Valley and Glen Haven Elementary Schools. We are very pleased to welcome such talented staff to our school and I will be sharing more about each one in upcoming newsletters.

Communication

Connect-ED

I will continue to use the computerized telephone calling system to notify parents and staff about important events and issues of concern to our school community. The system, **MCPS Connect-ED**, is designed to enhance school communications and increase parent participation in school activities. **MCPS Connect-ED** allows principals to telephone parents and staff quickly and efficiently by sending a recorded message to the designated phone of families and staff members. **Should you wish to opt out of this service, please call the school office.** If you have any questions about MCPS Connect-ED, please give me a call and I will be happy to discuss them with you.

Newsletters/Websites

Another way to stay informed about instruction, procedures, new programs, and family events is to read **classroom newsletters** (weekly or monthly), the **PTA website**, the **Principal's Newsletter** (twice a month), **school information folders**, and the **Ritchie Park website**.

Upcoming Events

School Begins

We look forward to welcoming all students to the first day of the 2009-2010 school year on **Monday, August 31**. The professional and support staff will return to school during the week of August 24 to plan for the new year.

Attachments to this Newsletter

Enclosed with this newsletter, you will find the **new bus schedule**, a **classroom supply list**, information on the **School Meals program**, and a **school calendar**. *Information on the orientation meeting for kindergarten parents will be sent under separate cover.* I hope you will take a few minutes to read through this material and share pertinent items with your child.

Kindergarten Parent Orientation Program To Take Place on August 26

A special one-hour orientation program will take place for all parents of kindergarten children on Wednesday evening, August 26, at 7:00 p.m. in the All Purpose Room at Ritchie Park. This orientation will provide parents with an opportunity to meet **Mrs. Ballen, Mrs. Callahan, Ms. Friedland, and Mrs. Hershey (formerly Ms. Weaver) our kindergarten teachers**, and learn more about expectations for the kindergarten year. Parents who are unable to attend will receive the information either at the Sneak Preview or on the first day of school.

Sneak Preview Set for Thursday, August 27, 3:00-4:00 p.m.

The staff cordially invites you and your children to attend the annual "Sneak Preview." This is an opportunity for you and your child to locate your child's classroom and say "hello" to his/her new teacher. **A new procedure will take effect this year. Postcards will be mailed to students the week of August 24th giving information about class assignments.** Keep in mind that a parent or responsible adult should accompany children. Students are encouraged to bring their school supplies to "Sneak Preview" to drop off in their new classroom.

New Family Orientation

This year, 30 minutes prior to Sneak Preview, we are sponsoring a "new family orientation" from 2:30 – 3:00 p.m. in the All Purpose Room at Ritchie Park. This meeting is for **parents with students in grades 1-5 only and NOT for parents of kindergarten students.** At this time, you and your children will be given a "private tour" of the building and you will have an opportunity to chat with staff members and parents about any questions and concerns you may have prior to the start of school.

Opening Day Procedures

On the first day of school, August 31, all students will be greeted by staff and directed to their classrooms as they arrive at school. Non-classroom staff will be stationed throughout the school helping your child. Classroom teachers will greet the children in their classrooms.

School Hours

Office Hours	-	8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Grades K-5	-	8:50 a.m.-3:05 p.m.

Students should plan on arriving at school between 8:30 and 8:45. The first bell 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” after 8:50. Please make every effort to insure that your child arrives at school between 8:30 and 8:45.**

Please be sure to read the enclosed flyer on our computerized prepaid lunch program (also known as the SNAP program). Breakfast and lunch prices are included on this form.

Applications for the Free and Reduced-price Meal System will be sent home the first day of school. Menus for the upcoming month will also be sent home with students. The menu for the first day of school will be: Chicken Nuggets or Gardenburger. Last minute changes to this menu can be found on the Food Services web site at www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/foodserv/.

Transportation/Safety

A bus schedule for students is attached. ***PLEASE NOTE THERE IS AN ADDITIONAL BUS (ROUTE 5107) SERVING THE FALLS GROVE COMMUNITY. IF YOU ARE DRIVING YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL OR PICKING HIM/HER UP AT THE END OF THE DAY, PLEASE DO NOT ENTER THE BUS CIRCLE DURING ARRIVAL OR DEPARTURE TIMES. THERE IS A SEPARATE STUDENT DROP-OFF CIRCLE NEXT TO THE BUS CIRCLE THAT YOU SHOULD USE TO ENTER AND EXIT. SIGNS ARE POSTED FOR THE DROP-OFF CIRCLE AND FOR VISITOR PARKING SO PLEASE BE LOOKING FOR THEM.*** It is important that students know appropriate bus behavior. We will be reviewing bus expectations during the first day of school. To insure safety, it is imperative that students remain seated, talk in soft voices, and be cooperative with the patrols and bus driver. Patrols are assigned to buses to help keep order. They are only 4th and 5th graders, and need to have the cooperation of all students. If you have any concerns about bus behavior, please call me or Mrs. Hill/Mr. Nelson, our patrol sponsors. Any questions about buses, schedules and general transportation topics should be directed to Jenine Herron, Bus Route Supervisor, Shady Grove Transportation Depot, 301-670-8271.

Principal's Newsletter

As I mentioned earlier in this newsletter, I will send home a ***Principal's Newsletter*** twice a month which will go home on Fridays in classroom folders. It will contain important information, reminders and notices, so please watch for the “gold sheet(s).” I am looking forward to working with you and your child to make this a most rewarding and exciting year. Whenever there is a concern, please be sure to talk with your child's teacher or with Mrs. Coates or me. We are all here to provide the best educational program for your child. Enjoy the remainder of the summer, and I hope to see many of you at the Sneak Preview on August 27th.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Dougherty