

August 12, 2026

Greetings Pyle Families and Students,

I hope this letter finds you and your family doing well and enjoying the beautiful, long days of summer. While summer isn't quite over yet, I truly hope you have found time to rest, recharge, and enjoy a well-deserved break with loved ones.

As the start of the school year approaches, my anticipation is growing by the day for the start of the school year. I am absolutely thrilled and deeply honored to be stepping into the role as your next principal. There is a unique energy that comes with a fresh school year, and I find myself becoming more excited by the moment to officially greet our students as they walk through the doors of Thomas W. Pyle Middle School!

Over the last few weeks, I have had the privilege of learning so much about this incredible community, its rich traditions, and our shared dedication to ensuring every student fulfills their academic and personal potential. Joining this community is a joy, and I look forward to partnering with you to continue this journey of excellence. Together, we will make this a remarkable year of growth, discovery, and connection for our students.

In this message, you will find important information regarding the start of the school year, details on how we plan to welcome our students and families, and key Pyle updates.

Thank you for your warm welcome into the Pyle community. Enjoy the remaining days of summer, and I will see you very soon!

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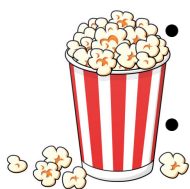
Looking towards the 2026-2027 School Year

Principal Meet and Greet

Before we begin the school year together, I want to ensure there are plenty of opportunities where we can informally meet one another and meet in person. Please join me at a few of our Principal Meet and Greet prior to the school year starting!

- **Wednesday August 19th from 4-6pm** at Max's Best Ice Cream for a **Sweet Start with the Principal**
 - Join us at Max's Best Ice Cream in downtown Bethesda, grab a sweet treat with your family and meet Ms. McAleese before the school year begins!
- **Saturday August 22nd from 9am -12 pm** at Albert Einstein HS for the **MCPS Back to School Fair**





- **Sunday August 23rd from 5-7pm** at Thomas W. Pyle Middle School for our **Back to School Picnic**
 - More information on the Back to School Picnic is below
- **Monday August 24th from 1-2pm** for **Popcorn with the Principal** for our 6th grade parents and new to Pyle parents in the Pyle Cafeteria.

Instructional Leadership Team (ILT)

Our leadership team has been working hard, reflecting on our school's strengths and thinking intentionally about our priorities to reach our ultimate goal, our North Star: student success. We are focused on the core values and beliefs that guide us to ensure every student feels supported and empowered. As we navigate this year together, we remain committed to creating a safe and welcoming environment for everyone.

Welcoming Students and the Community

Back to School Picnic

We warmly invite all of our Pyle families to join us for our Back to School Picnic on August 23rd from 5:00-7:00 PM. This is a wonderful opportunity to connect with the school community, meet our new principal, and enjoy everything our community has to offer before the official first day of school. We will have food trucks and shaved ice available for purchase, or families are welcome to bring their own picnic to enjoy on the grounds. We look forward to seeing everyone there!

Transition Day- Monday, August 24

Our staff is currently preparing for the arrival of our students for the 2026-2027 school year. All 6th-grade students and new-to-Pyle 7th and 8th-grade students are invited to Transition Day on Monday, August 24th. Students will have the opportunity to walk through their regular schedule, practice opening their lockers, and become familiar with the Pyle building.

Parents of incoming 6th graders and new-to-Pyle 7th/8th graders are invited to "Popcorn with the Principal" from 1:00-2:00pm on Monday, August 24th, in the Cafeteria. We will share information regarding Pyle's instructional program and families will have the opportunity to have a meet and greet with the leadership team.

First Day of School - Tuesday, August 25

We look forward to welcoming all of our students back from summer break on Tuesday, August 25. The typical school day is from 8:15am to 3:00pm. At 8:03 AM, a bell will ring to signal that it is time for students to enter the school.

To ensure a smooth flow of traffic, students will enter through designated doors by grade level:

- 6th Grade: Enter through the entrance along the car pick-up/drop-off line.
- 7th Grade: Enter through the cafeteria entrance.
- 8th Grade: Enter through the Main Entrance.

In the event of inclement weather, students will proceed to following designated areas until the 8:03 AM bell rings:

- 6th Graders: 6th-grade hallway
- 7th Graders: Main Gym
- 8th Graders: Cafeteria

On Tuesday and Wednesday of the first week, we will run a special Homeroom schedule.

- Students will report directly to their homeroom as soon as the 8:03 AM bell rings. There will be posters hung in the hallways to inform students where their homeroom classroom is located.
- Students will receive their schedules during this homeroom period.

Success starts with showing up on time! It is imperative that students arrive at school and to each individual class period promptly every day.

Back to School Night - Thursday, August 27

On Thursday, August 27, 2026, we will host our annual Back-to-School Night for parents. The evening will provide you with an opportunity to meet your child's/children's teachers and receive information about the program of instruction for each class. Our teachers are looking forward to the evening, and I hope you are as well!

Back-to-School Night will begin promptly at 7:00 p.m. with time allotted during Period 1 for school and PTSA business. The building will be open at 6:30 p.m., so parents may walk around the building. You are requested to report to your child's Period 1 class by 7:00 p.m. If you arrive after the end of the first period, please go to the appropriate class period that matches your arrival time.

A copy of your child's schedule, along with a school map and schedule for the evening will be sent home with your child on Wednesday, August 26th. Remember to bring that schedule with you to Back-to-School Night on the 27th.

Please be aware that there is limited parking at our school site. We will have satellite parking at Walt Whitman High School, and we will be running a bus shuttle from the Whitman parking lot to our school. The Shuttle Service will begin at 6:00PM. We look forward to seeing you then.

One thing to note about the evening is that, unfortunately, time restraints will not provide opportunities for parents to consult with teachers about individual students. If you need to consult with a teacher or counselor about a student, you can do so by calling the school and leaving a message for the individual or you may send an e-mail to the appropriate person.

Pyle Updates and Operations

Cell Phones and Personal Mobile Devices (PMD)

This school year all Montgomery County Public Schools will be restricting the use of cell phones during school hours. These restrictions are in alignment with the Maryland Phone-Free School Act (HB 525).

Effective the first day of school, August 24, 2026, all students are not permitted to utilize personal mobile devices (cell phones, tablets, e-readers, personal laptops, smart watches, smart glasses, and anything with a microphone, camera, speaker, or headphones/earbuds (including AirPods) during the instructional day. This includes during lunch and in the hallways as students transition to class.

We believe that by restricting personal mobile devices it will reduce distractions to your child's learning, support their social development through increased engagement in discussions with their peers and teachers, and promote a safer school environment. For more information, including how you can support your child, please visit the [FAQ page](#).

In addition, we are using a cart model for Chromebooks. This allows students to access devices conveniently in class as needed, so they do not need to transport them between classes or home. Students can easily access their assignments and class resources online via Canvas. If your student is in need of a chromebook for home use, please use this link to complete the request form linked [here](#).

Drop off and Pick Up

With high traffic volumes during drop-off and pick-up times, please review these essential safety rules to keep our students safe and traffic moving smoothly:

- Use the Right Lane Only: Students may only exit vehicles from the right lane. Never let your student exit from the left lane, as walking between cars is highly dangerous and blocks traffic.
- Obey All Signs: Please follow all designated drop-off/pick-up signs and locations.
- Exiting the Driveway: Remember, it is "Right Turn Only" when exiting the school driveway onto Wilson Lane.
- Using the Service Road: If you drop off or pick up your student on the service road across from the school, please be courteous to our neighbors. Do not block driveways, and ensure residents have enough space to get in and out.
- **Please do not use the bus lane on the side of the school as a pick up or drop off area.**

Drive Slowly & Stay Alert. Please take your time, watch closely for students, and always practice patience and courtesy.

Bus Routes

Bus routes for the 2026–2027 school year are expected to be available starting Friday, Aug. 14. Visit the [Division of Transportation Services website](#) to find your route and get set for the first day of school! Please remember that buses may run late due to traffic, arrival and dismissal congestion, student support, etc. If your student will take the bus to and from school, please review these important bus guidelines with them:

- Most students will ride the same bus number home that they took to school in the morning, please have your student remember their bus number.

- During dismissal, bus numbers are posted on two whiteboards, one by the Main Entrance and one by the Cafeteria Entrance.
- Students are not permitted to ride home on a friend's or unassigned bus. Many of our routes are completely full and cannot accommodate extra riders.

If there are any last-minute bus adjustments, we will announce changes to students before dismissal, post the updates on the bus whiteboards, and hold the buses a little longer to ensure every student finds their ride.

Any questions or concerns about bus routes should be directed to the Bethesda Bus Depot at 240-740-6580.

Attendance Information

Consistent attendance is vital for student growth and academic success. Frequent absences or tardiness lead to lost instructional time and can hinder progress. For these reasons, we closely monitor attendance as a top priority. Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more of the school year (about 18 days total, or 9.5 days by the end of Quarter 2), regardless of the reason.

If your family faces challenges affecting attendance, please communicate with us. We are committed to partnering with you to identify barriers and provide support.

To report an absence, use the form on our website which can be found [here](#). For tardies, parents must complete the online attendance note unless the student arrived on a late bus. If a student needs to leave school early, parent/guardian should fill out the form below prior to dismissal time. On the morning of the early dismissal, remind your student to come to the main office for an Early Departure Pass. Before leaving school, students must sign out in the Main Office. Students may not leave school grounds without permission.

If you forget to give your child an Early Dismissal Note or if you have an unplanned dismissal, please make sure to come to the main office 10-15 minutes early.

Additionally, MCPS policy requires schools to withdraw students who have 10 days in a row of unexcused absences. Please be sure to notify us if your child will have an extended absence for any excused reasons.

Counseling Updates

Counselor Assignments for 26-27 School Year

Julie Barrios	Grade 6 (last names A-L)
Ricky Stakem	Grade 6 (last names M-Z)
Randi Vogel	Grade 7 (last names A-N)
Christina Castellano	Grade 7 (last names O-Z)
Katie Sonnabend	Grade 8 (last names A-M)
Erika Huck	Grade 8 (last names N-Z)

Save the Date

Meet the Counselors Coffee on Thursday, September 17th from 9:45-11AM in the Cafeteria

Stay tuned

8th grade students and parents will receive information this year on the new Regional Programs model in MCPS. Please be on the lookout for future emails for parent/general information sessions.

ParentVUE, Parent Square, myMCPS

To stay up to date with communication, grades, and assignments please ensure you are enrolled in ParentVUE, Parent Square and have access to your child's myMCPS.

- ParentVUE displays information about attendance, class schedule, grades, report cards, calendars, school information, and other information that is stored in the Synergy Student Information System
- MyMCPSClassroom is the learning management system or digital learning platform. Parents may use an "observer" account where they can view instructional information and resources.
- ParentSquare is a messaging platform that is used to facilitate communication among the MCPS district, school administrators, staff, teachers, students and parents.

ParentSquare Quick Guide for Parents

[English](#) [Spanish](#) [French](#) [Korean](#) [Chinese](#) [Vietnamese](#) [Portuguese](#) [Amharic](#)

MySchoolBucks

MySchoolBucks is an optional service for parents to view recent purchases and make prepayments to a student's school meals account for breakfast, lunch, and à-la-carte meals online, using a credit or debit card. Parents can manage their child's school meal payments by creating a secure online account. Payments to student accounts through MySchoolBucks are an option and not a requirement. Please note that there is a \$2.49 transaction fee charged for each credit/debit card payment made with MySchoolBucks. Funds can continue to be added to student meal accounts at no charge by bringing cash or checks directly to school cafeteria managers.

How to Enroll in MySchoolBucks

- Go to www.myschoolbucks.com and click on "Sign up today!"
- Create an account for yourself, and add your children. You will need the student's name (exactly as it appears on their report card), school, grade, birth date, and six-digit student ID number.
- (OPTIONAL) Provide credit or debit card information to set up prepayments or recurring payments.

MCPS Safety Day

All MCPS schools are required to complete a series of emergency drills. Schools will also take time to review safety procedures, such as how families would be reunited after an emergency and how staff and students might respond in the unlikely event of a serious threat. These drills and conversations are age-appropriate, focused on building confidence and preparedness in a calm and supportive way.

On August 27th, Pyle students will take part in a Safety Day where they will practice and review drills in the case of any unforeseen emergency. Each period will host a drill that teachers will walk students through step by step.

Safety Day Schedule

Period 1 - Discuss Safety Day Premise and Fire Drill

Period 2 - Secure, Hold, Lockdown Drills

Period 3 - Earthquake Drill

Period 4 - Active Assailant Lesson

Period 5 - Personal Body Safety Lessons

Period 6 - Severe Weather Shelter

Period 7 - Reverse Evacuation Drill

Staff Contacts

- Principal: [Ms. Kristi McAleese](#)
- Principal's Administrative Secretary: [Ms. Carol Grabner](#)
- Grade 6 Administrator: [Ms. Michelle Harmon](#)
- Grade 7 Administrator: [Ms. Lauren Stuckey](#)
- Grade 8 Administrator: [Ms. Stacey Noonan](#)
- Resource Counselor: [Ms. Erika Huck](#)
- Attendance Secretary: [Ms. Johnese Saunders](#)
- Counseling Secretary: [Ms. Donna McLelland](#)

Upcoming Dates

- 🕒 August 19th from 4-6 Principal Meet and Greet at Max's Best Ice Cream
- 🕒 August 23rd from 5-7 PM - Back-to-School Picnic at Pyle Middle School
- 🕒 August 24th - Transition Day for all 6th grade and new 7th and 8th grade students
- 🕒 August 25th - First Official Day of School
- 🕒 August 27th from 6-9 PM - Back-to-School Night
- 🕒 September 10th - 6th grade Back-to-School Night

We look forward to welcoming our students back for a fantastic year! If you need any support this summer or have a question, please don't hesitate to contact us or our administrative team.

Enjoy the rest of the summer!

Sincerely,

Kristi McAleese