



Dear RICA Families and Students,

As we close out the month of September over the next two weeks, we will see a change in the weather which may prompt a change in mood. Let's continue to focus on the positive aspects of our school community and make deposits into our students and families so that we continue to benefit from a positive outlook.

Ms. Khadija Mitchell

Acting Principal

RICA

ATSI Designation

Members of the RICA Community- Please read the following letter regarding our schools ATSI status.

[RICA ATSI Community Letter](#)



MCPS Upcoming Calendar Reminders:

Monday, September 21 - No School

Friday, October 2 - Interims Due

Thursday, October 8 - Interims Distributed

Wednesday, October 14 - PSAT

Friday, October 16 - Professional Day - No school for students

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Important Information to Share with Families!

Summer Student Service Learning Hours Due by Sept. 25

Secondary students need 75 SSL hours to graduate. Keep earning with these [September opportunities](#). Students who enroll in MCPS after Grade 6 will receive a waiver that prorates the SSL requirement. A full list of in-person and virtual opportunities, reminders and updates are available on the [SSL website](#)

Planning for High School? Explore the Center Programs

MCPS is hosting a virtual information session on Sept. 23 to learn more about the Center Program application process, requirements and offerings for students entering Grade 9 in the 2027–2028 school year.

It will be held:

- ❖ **Wednesday, Sept. 23, 7 p.m.:** [English](#) (with ASL and live interpretation in Amharic, Chinese and French) | **8 p.m.,** [Spanish](#)

For 8th grade families, in addition to the academic, extracurricular, athletic and social opportunities available at your local high school, you can also [explore the specialized Center programs](#) offered within your region. Programs are organized across five themes:

- Medical Science
- International Baccalaureate, Humanities and Languages
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)
- Leadership and Public Service
- Visual and Performing Arts

Applying to a Center program is optional, and students may rank up to eight programs based on their interests. Your student's high school journey is full of possibilities. **Learn more in this one pager:** [English](#) | [Spanish](#)

Now You Know: [English](#) | [español](#) | [中文](#) | [français](#) | [Português](#) | [한국어](#) | [tiếng Việt](#) | [አማርኛ](#)

One Quick, Confidential Application. More Support for Your Family.

Here's one school form that's worth a few minutes of your time. If your family may qualify for Free and Reduced-Price Meals (FARMS), apply! There's no stigma, no special lunch line and no reason to hesitate. A student's eligibility is confidential, and students receiving free meals use the cafeteria just like everyone else.

Best of all, you only need one application for all MCPS students in your household, even if they attend different schools.

It's quick. It's confidential. And it could make a real difference for your family.

Don't count yourself out, take a few minutes and see if you qualify.

[Apply for FARMS and learn more](#)

[Family Quick Guide Pull-Out: Mental Health & Safety](#)

Small conversations can make a big difference. This week's Quick Guide Pull-Out gives parents and caregivers simple **Do's and Don'ts** for supporting their child's mental health and well-being, from checking in and noticing changes to building healthy routines and knowing when to ask for help.

The guide also includes **school-based supports and important crisis resources** so families know where to turn when they have a concern.

[Take a look](#), save it and keep it handy. Supporting student well-being is something we do together.

Help for College Planning: Fairs, Workshops and Financial Aid

MCPS, Career Council, Inc. and College Fairs USA are hosting an in-person College Fair from 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 9 at the Activity Center at Bohrer Park in Gaithersburg for high school juniors and seniors. Students, who will attend the fair during the school day, will receive a link that will allow them to complete an online profile. For more information, students should contact their school counselor. **Fair Flyer:** [English](#) | [Spanish](#)

Attention high school seniors and families: As the college admissions and scholarship season kicks off, remember that MCPS College and Career Navigators (CCNs) are available to assist and answer questions about the college application process and financial aid. High schools are hosting a variety of in-person and virtual workshops to provide guidance to families on finding the college right path, writing essays and understanding the Common App. [See what's being offered](#) and join us! Montgomery College is also offering upcoming financial aid events. [Learn more](#).

Additional, but Good to Share

Showing Up Makes a Difference, Attendance Matters

Mornings can be hectic. Alarms get snoozed and sometimes just getting out the door feels like a victory. But every school day matters. Being here means learning, connecting with friends and teachers, and being part of the school community.

Your student belongs here. We want them here. Every day matters. [Need help?](#)

Saturday School Is Back—The Sixth Day of Learning Can Go a Long Way!

Sleeping in is great. But you know what else feels pretty good? **Getting ahead.**

Saturday School is gearing up for another year of learning, confidence-building and extra academic support for MCPS students. With certified teachers, support aligned with the MCPS curriculum and locations across the county, it's a Saturday morning well spent.

Opening ceremonies are Saturday, Sept. 19, and registration is coming up—so don't forget to get your student signed up!

[Learn more about Saturday School and register](#)

Love Sports? Get Involved Behind the Scenes

MCPS Athletics has many opportunities to get involved, even if you don't play sports. Opportunities are available to serve as managers, scorekeepers, statisticians and photographers. For more information, reach out to your school's [athletic coordinator](#) (middle school) or [athletic director](#) (high school).

Helping to Keep Schools Safe

During the week of Sept. 21–25, secondary schools will partner with the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office to offer one of two student assemblies addressing opioid/fentanyl awareness and school and gun violence prevention.

- **Speak Up, Save a Life** discusses the dangers of fentanyl and other dangerous opioids, and shares what to do if you see someone who has overdosed.
- **Working Together to Keep Schools Safe and Gun Free** addresses school shootings, local gun violence, gun laws and ghost guns, and emphasizes the importance of speaking up when something doesn't seem right.

Wear Your MCPS Pride—and Make a Difference!

Show your MCPS spirit with official gear for the whole family! From sweatshirts and pullovers to shirts and more, there's something for every MCPS fan. **Best of all, every purchase gives back—all proceeds help offset student meal debt.**

Shop the [MCPS Gear Store](#) today!

Student Opportunities

- **Youth Town Hall:** The Montgomery County Council meeting will be held at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 29, at the Council Office Building, Third Floor, 100 Maryland Avenue in Rockville, or on Zoom. Student attendees will be able to share their questions and concerns, and participate in a conversation with county leadership. [Register to attend](#).
- **Girls With Impact Fall Session:** This free, online, 10-week entrepreneurship program available to high school students begins the week of Sept. 28. Classes are held on Tuesdays at 7 p.m., Wednesdays at 4:30 p.m. or Wednesdays at 8 p.m. [Register](#). Learn more: [English](#) | [Spanish](#)
- **Latina Legacy Conference:** This event for Latina female high school students will be held from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 30 at 15 W. Gude Drive in Rockville. Topics will include: Latina wellness and mental health; Latinas in education; Latina mentorship, and social justice and Latina student voice. To register, students should reach out to their assistant principal by Thursday, Oct. 15.
- **Share Your Vision for America:** Students in Grades 5–12 can write and perform a presidential speech and win prizes up to \$1,000. Make Your Speech calls on students to imagine they've just been elected president and are delivering their inaugural address in a 2-3 minute video. Present your best unifying vision for our democracy. [Learn more](#). **Deadline: Friday, Oct. 30**

Info Worth Repeating

Hate Bias Protocols

Remind your child that if something doesn't feel right, they should tell a trusted adult. [Learn more about MCPS hate/bias protocols](#).

Student Code of Conduct 26-27 (Please Read)

Review the Student Code of Conduct. [This document](#) helps us create schools that are welcoming, respectful, orderly and safe.

MCPS Grading and Reporting Website

[Grading and Reporting Information Website](#)

Purpose: To provide updated information about the revisions to Regulation IKA-RA.

Website Resources:

- [Grading and Reporting FAQs](#)
- [Grading and Reporting Revisions Quick Reference Guide](#)
- [Revised Middle School Report Card Mock-Up](#)
- [Revised High School Report Card Mock-Up](#)

The website also includes links to centrally created community messages and the [Board of Education Presentation](#) on June 4, 2026.

No Cell, Bell to Bell

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.



NO CELL, BELL TO BELL
Family & Student Guide
Learning First. Every Student. Every Day.
**Personal Mobile Devices Stay Put Away
THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE ACADEMIC DAY.**

WHY

Phones and other personal devices can be a major distraction during the school day. **Keeping devices away helps students focus on learning, connect with one another, and supports a safer, healthier school environment.**

Maryland has also passed the Joanne C. Benson Maryland Phone-Free School Act, requiring school districts to limit student device use beginning in 2027-2028. MCPS is starting the transition this year so students, staff and families have time to adjust.

WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO KNOW

Students may bring a phone or personal mobile device to school – but it must be put away and unused for the entire Academic Day.
That means devices stay away during:
Class • Hallways • Passing Periods • Lunch • Recess • Restrooms

DO

- ✓ Put your device away before the school day begins.
- ✓ Keep it away until the dismissal bell.
- ✓ Follow staff directions.
- ✓ Use school-issued technology when directed by your teacher.

Don't

- ✗ Text, call or use social media.
- ✗ Take photos, video or audio recordings.
- ✗ Use AirPods, earbuds or headphones connected to a personal device.
- ✗ Use a smartwatch or other personal device during the Academic Day.

Before school? / After school? / During the Academic Day? Put it away.

WHAT HAPPENS IF...?

- Unauthorized use will result in discipline aligned with the MCPS Student Code of Conduct and **will include your device being taken away and secured until the end of the school day.**
- Repeated violations may result in additional consequences, **including not being permitted to bring the device to school.**

IMPORTANT EXCEPTIONS: Some students may use a device when specifically authorized for an IEP, 504 Plan, medical or other approved accommodation, emergency or caregiving need, language translation, or another permitted school purpose.
MCPS is not responsible for personal devices that are lost, stolen or damaged at school.

Montgomery County Public Schools 2025

Stay Connected to MCPS

- **VISIT** the [MCPS homepage](#).
- **CALL** 240-740-3000. Staff take calls from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays, in English and Spanish (240-740-2845). Visit the [AskMCPS website](#).
- **READ** news and information sent via email and text message and on the [MCPS News](#) page.
- **FOLLOW** the MCPS social media pages:
[x.com/mcps](#) / [facebook.com/mcpsmd](#) / [instagram.com/mcps_md](#)
[facebook.com/mcpsespanol](#) / [x.com/MCPSEspanol](#) /
[instagram.com/mcpsenespanol](#)
- **SIGN UP** for [emails and text alerts](#) and make sure your [ParentVue](#) information is up to date.
- **WATCH** the MCPS cable channels Comcast 34 (1071 HD), Verizon 36 or RCN 89

More MCPS Resources

- [School calendar](#)
- [Parent resource page](#)
- [News and Information page](#) / [Noticias en Español](#)
- [Latest photo galleries](#)
- [MCPS TV videos](#)
- [MCPS TV español](#)