Correspondence Writing Tips

A COMPANION TO THE MCPS CORRESPONDENCE MANUAL

Third in a series of useful tips
Misused and Confused

Comprise; Compose
Use these with care.

To comprise means “to contain, embrace.”
Example: The state of Maryland comprises 24 counties. The phrase comprised of, though increasingly common, is poor usage.

To compose means “to make up, to form the substance of something.”
Example: The committee is composed of parents, teachers, and community stakeholders.

Tool for Good Writing
Keep a dictionary within reach. MCPS uses Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (the 11th edition is available).
- Use it to find out what words mean and to confirm that words mean what you think they mean.
- Use it to find out the preferred spelling of a word.
- Use it to find out what preposition to use.
Example: methodical, ~in his daily routine.
A dictionary also helps in finding the accepted spelling of the names of people and places. Check out the Handbook on Style and Punctuation section, (page 1604 in the 11th edition).


Look for more tips in the near future!
E-mail us for a quick response to your grammar and style questions: Donna_M_Marks@mcpsmd.org

Our Editorial Help Desk also appreciates your phone calls and visits: 301-517-8139
CESC, Room 20
We are also your contact for a copy of the MCPS Correspondence Manual.