



Beall Elementary School

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SUMMER NEWS

August
2020



A high-quality education is the fundamental right of every child at Beall Elementary School. Staff, children, parents and the community will form a multicultural learning environment which provides all students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will empower them to be successful, contributing citizens of the world.

Dear Beall Families,

I usually use this platform to share my thoughts and feelings about the upcoming school year, highlight current events, share a personal experience, or communicate educational philosophy. This year, I want to take a moment to share lessons that I really learned from my daughter. As a parent, I have been incredibly concerned since the school bell rang on March 13, effectively closing the building for students. My oldest child is in college and was about to be heading out for Spring Break. He pretty easily transitioned to a distance learning environment. My other children were in 12th, 9th, and 6th grades. Like so many of you, the distance learning programming for my children was a mixed experience. One of my daughters was pretty quick to establish a daily routine, set her alarm, complete her work independently, communicate with teachers and friends when she was struggling with an assignment. Another daughter grew frustrated quickly. She hated the virtual learning experience. She told us (parents) that she was bored, didn't know how to access the work, the assignments were too easy, and got very frustrated when the technology went out. She missed her friends, grew impatient with working independently, and seemed to be engaged in significant learning a minimal amount of time. I, too, often felt the challenge of trying to support my children with their virtual learning while maintaining a work schedule. This feeling was compounded when I heard from, and subsequently felt the anxiety of, Beall staff who were committed to doing their best to support Beall students while meeting their own family's needs.

However, it was my daughter, the high school senior, who taught me the biggest lessons. I worried about her academically, socially, and emotionally. She has always been a good student, but her access to teachers and course content was limited. Would she get the instruction needed that would allow her to be prepared for college? What about all of the senior experiences...prom, banquet, awards ceremony, graduation? What about her initial college experiences...accepted student day visits, team try-outs, Orientation? As I had observed with my oldest, I anticipate her social groups will change with the college experience. It's natural. Friends drift apart. Would she even have the opportunity to get together again with her *familia* (as she liked to call her close-knit group) to celebrate and wish each other well before they all departed to different regions of the country? Throughout the spring, my daughter continued to amaze me with the way she faced each day. When I asked her if she was okay, she told me that she "cried herself to sleep" each night. She then smiled and told me that this helped her get over the sadness of what she was losing out on and could begin each morning with a fresh perspective and appreciation for what she had, not what she didn't have. She showed gratitude that she had been accepted to college, could continue to text/Instagram/Snapchat with her friends, would be able to finish her classwork, and that *we* were all going through this together. Late spring brought alternatives. She demonstrated grace as she navigated her high school's plan for graduation and her future college's plan for orientation online. Her *familia* figured out a way to find opportunities to socialize while maintaining physical distance. She was even able to begin working again. Then, she recently learned that the university housing would be delayed in their opening, classes would be online only through most of September, and athletic teams may not be able to meet in person this fall. Instead of focusing on the loss of the "traditional freshman year experience," my daughter has been able to quickly adapt to the changes that seem to arise daily. "I have to just go with it," she told me, since one of the few things that she can really control is how she responds to situations.

As we look to begin the 2020-2021 school year, we all recognize the physical, academic, and emotional challenges of beginning the year in a virtual learning environment. I have worked for Montgomery County Public Schools for 25 years as a teacher, instructional specialist, and administrator. I have been at Beall since the 2011-2012 school year. I love working for the students and families of this community. I feel that we have an outstanding staff that are committed to our students. The Beall community has already shown that we are resilient and compassionate. We are not perfect, but we are very good together! We will continue to grow professionally and personally in order to foster a positive environment for learning and teaching. Despite the physical, academic and emotional challenges we will face in a virtual learning environment, we will face them together. I am honored to be a part of this journey with our Beall community. I truly believe that we are stronger together and will be able to manage this difficult school situation we are faced with due to the global pandemic. I hope we can all appreciate the three key messages inspired by my daughter:

Teacher Assignments

Please see blurb on bottom of page 2 of this letter.

Included in this letter:

- Principal's Message
- Staffing Updates
- Important dates
- School Hours/Schedule
- Assessment Information and Grading/Reporting
- *Bella's Best*
- Cafeteria News
- Parent Teacher Association (PTA) Information
- Student Materials Distribution
- Synergy Parent Letters
- myMCPS Classroom
- Zoom Tips & Tricks
- Supply List
- Generation Z Tutoring

- Gratitude
- Grace
- Go with the flow

As a staff, we see ourselves as *community builders*. We are enhanced by the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of our community. Our students greatly benefit from the opportunities they have to learn from each other. We want our students to be intellectual risk takers, persistent, and collaborative. Relationships are the foundation of our success. Some may want to measure our work by test scores, academic levels, or other singular data points. We really want to help our students become good people. Our goal is to have our students become positive contributors, independent thinkers, and develop a sense of who they really are. As a staff, we will develop plans, schedules, and activities that intentionally build relationships with students during the first few weeks of school.

Obviously, this year will be different than previous years. Whether you are coming from another school, another state, or have your first child joining us, we hope that you will quickly see how amazing it is to be a Beall Dragon family. As I met with our Instructional Leadership Team this summer, we looked carefully at our initiatives and instructional strategies. We have been working hard to develop instructional plans that considered feedback from our spring and summer virtual learning experiences, aligns with MCPS and state guidelines, and meets the needs of our students. There will be many changes this fall in our instructional programming. We will continue to implement the new math program with fidelity. A new literacy program called Benchmark Advanced will be implemented in all grade levels. Students should expect daily live instruction in the virtual learning environment. Attendance will be taken. MCPS has indicated that we will return to the more traditional grading and reporting system. While I know this is a difficult time for many of us, I remain optimistic that our school community can thrive despite our circumstances, and will continue to be a place of academic excellence and social emotional well-being for all. It will not be easy and the changes will be quite significant, but we will do all that we can to make this work. Our students need us and the support of the many adults around them to reassure them, care for them and teach them during these challenging times.

Beall staff will continue to reflect on improving our collaboration, planning, and instructional delivery to support all students. We believe that our intentional actions will result in a rigorous and respectful learning environment, whether online or in-person. In addition to being independent thinkers, we want all students to be flexible thinkers. We want students to reach their full potential in all academic settings. Our Instructional Leadership Team will be leaders in identifying strategies, facilitating conversations, and recognizing changes in instruction that will help all of our staff to address inequities that may be occurring during instruction. We will continue to implement MCPS initiatives, increase our use of data, build positive relationships with students, and work collaboratively as we grow professionally. We have challenged ourselves to make sure that all of our students have equal opportunities for success and high expectations.

Our community reflects that the schoolhouse, whether in person or virtual, is a place where students, staff, and parents are all invested in learning together. We recognize that a student cannot learn without making mistakes. When we frame our mistakes as “teachable moments,” we can apply the lessons that we learned to be successful in the future. Teachable moments energize us, allowing us to co-create a community that is dedicated to sharing values, embracing the need to help each other be successful, and facilitating a sense of connection. As a member of the Beall community, I am confident that I will be challenged to do my best, allowed to make (and learn from my) mistakes, and always feel supported by a network of Dragons who want to see awesomeness from our students! Even as I write this letter, there are many decisions that need to be finalized (at the county and at the school level). Like my daughter did, let’s approach the year with gratitude, grace, and a willingness to *go with the flow*.

I look forward to greeting all of our new and returning students on **Monday, August 31**, for the first day of school. Prior to this date, there will be opportunities to meet staff, participate in a Back to School Night virtual event, and a Virtual Open House for students. As I said earlier, this will be a difficult experience for all of us. However, I know that we can do this together! *We’ve got this!* Afterall, we are a community of dragons.

See you in a few weeks.

Sincerely,

Elliot Alter

Mr. Elliot Alter, Principal

Teacher Assignments

Our staff worked hard last spring to develop instructional groups for the 2020-2021 school year using student data and teacher and parent feedback. When forming the classes, we factored in academic needs, social-emotional needs, peer matches and more. We also focused on organizing classes so we can provide the greatest amount of support from our ESOL, Special Education and Paraeducator team. Our teachers have already begun thinking creatively about their instructional programs to maximize the support and guidance that we can provide to all students. I can assure you that we have a very capable and caring staff who will work with you to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of your child. Our goal is to move forward with class assignments for the first semester and then re-evaluate class groupings after MCPS provides updates for the second semester. Specific classroom teacher assignments and class information will be provided prior to the start of school.

REMINDER: Student schedules (including teacher assignments) can be viewed in the [MCPS Parent Portal](#). We encourage you to take a few minutes to set up your account if you haven’t done so, yet. Once this portion of the Parent Portal becomes active, this will be the quickest and easiest way to identify your child’s homeroom teacher.

Staffing Updates

We want to update you on staff changes that have been made for the 2020-2021 school year. Every year, we have to say farewell to several friends and colleagues. This year, we have a couple of longtime Beall staff members who have chosen to move on to a new life adventure. However, we also are lucky enough to be able to welcome back a couple of former Dragons!

- ◆ Please join me in congratulating Mrs. Cohan, Mrs. Russell, and Ms. Ligon on completing successful MCPS experiences! We wish them the very best as they have retired from the school system and seek to enjoy their next great adventures.
- ◆ Mrs. Seibert and Ms. Hutchinson will be continuing their professional experiences at other MCPS schools.
- ◆ Mr. Lee will continue to be on leave.

They will be missed but will always be a part of the Beall family. We congratulate them and wish all of our departing staff the very best, wherever their new adventures may take them.

We are also excited to have some incredibly talented new staff members join the Beall community. Please join me in welcoming back Mrs. Kanowith (instrumental music) and Mr. McCarty (part-time PE). Staff new to Beall include: Ms. Davis (1st), Ms. Wagner (4th), Ms. Campbell (Resource), Ms. Pasekoff (paraeducator), Mr. Jenkins (building service team), Ms. Geary (cafeteria manager), Ms. Rim (academic focus), and Ms. Braun (school psychologist). Although not new, we congratulate Ms. Weaver on becoming Mrs. Searles (kdg) and wish her and her new husband a long and healthy marriage.

Currently, our homeroom teacher assignments are:

- **PreK & Headstart**– Mrs. Leighton-Oppler, Ms. Novotny, Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Tappis
- **Kindergarten**– Ms. Garcia, Mrs. Searles, Ms. Sumondong, Mrs. Wong
- **1st Grade**– Ms. Davis, Ms. Gozalo, Mrs. Op, Mrs. Schofer
- **2nd Grade**– Mrs. Claggett, Mrs. Friedman, Mrs. Hessler, Mrs. McDermott
- **3rd Grade**– Mrs. Buttrey, Mrs. DeVriendt, Ms. Koch
- **4th Grade**– Mrs. Newcomb, Mrs. Saffell, Mrs. Thomason, Ms. Wagner
- **5th Grade**– Ms. Czajkowski, Ms. Franklin, Mrs. Lewis
- **Special Education**– Mrs. King

Important Dates

- Week of August 17– tentative materials distribution
- Week of August 24– Teachers report
 - Virtual Back to School Nights to be scheduled for all grades
 - Virtual Sneak Peek to be scheduled
- August 31– First Day of School
- September 1– PTA Meeting (6:30 pm)
- September 7– Labor Day Holiday, No School
- [Link to school system calendar.](#)

School Hours/Schedule

MCPS has adopted a universal schedule for all elementary schools for the 2020-2021. This means that all MCPS elementary schools will begin instruction at the same time in the morning and end at the same time in the afternoon. There will be a common lunch break and wellness break in the middle of the day to allow students to step away from their screens. Beall staff will develop and communicate grade level specific schedules that align to MCPS guidance. Throughout the day, staff will schedule structured breaks and informal movement/brain breaks. A sample student schedule may be:

9:00-9:25 Social Emotional Learning (SEL) lesson
9:25-11:05 Literacy Block (including a formal break)
11:05-11:45 Science/Social Studies
11:45-1:00 Lunch and wellness break
1:00-2:25 Math (including a formal break)
2:25-3:15 Special (art, music, PE)/Interventions

A full day of online learning will be an adjustment for our students, staff and parents. I ask that we all remain flexible, understanding and most importantly, positive with our students.

Assessments/Grading & Reporting

MCPS has shared that grading will return to the letter grade/report card system. We will share more information on this as it becomes available. Students will participate in formal and informal assessments in their virtual classrooms. Teachers will use information from these assessments to plan instruction. Teachers will also provide feedback to students on assignments that are submitted for review. The feedback may be oral or written. Please remember that many assignments are reviewed by staff to monitor progress and identify points of confusion, but may not be graded or scored.

Bella's Best

Bella's Best is a schoolwide, positive behavior recognition system. Simply stated, we want to recognize the outstanding behaviors that our students exhibit each and everyday. We will be reviewing and attempting to modify this program to align with our virtual learning environment.

Cafeteria News

The 2020-2021 Free and Reduced Meals Services (FARMS) applications are now available online: www.MySchoolApps.com. Families can apply now to avoid any delays in September. We are encouraging all families to apply online this year. Please contact the school or the Division of Food and Nutrition Services at 301-284-4900 if you need assistance with this process. This application needs to be re-submitted each year.

MCPS will serve meals to all students through pickup at their home school or other area distributions. More information will be provided on how parents can sign up for meal service participation.

Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

We are very appreciative of the efforts of our PTA. The many roles of the PTA include fundraising to support instructional programs and student needs, planning social events, advocating for our students and community at county or school system functions, and offering parents a chance to be involved throughout the school year. The PTA is also instrumental in providing enrichment activities available to students beyond the school day. We encourage you to join the PTA and become a part of our partnership in which parents and teachers work together to ensure whole-school success! Check out their website: www.beallpta.org.

STUDENT MATERIALS DISTRIBUTION

As we prepare to start the 2020-2021 school year, we are planning a student materials distribution. Although we are still awaiting final guidance from the system, our distribution will take place in the Beall bus loop and we will plan to offer multiple time blocks. Included in the materials students will pick up: all students will receive an upgraded MCPS-issued touchscreen Chromebook, as well as consumable curriculum materials to support the Benchmark Advance and Eureka math curricula. Guidance on the specific process will be shared in another community update.

SYNERGY PARENT LETTERS

This summer, our student information system, gradebook, and the current parent portal migrated to MCPS's new data platform, *Synergy*. This new platform will host and manage student data in an efficient and user-friendly manner. Families will receive ParentVUE activation letters with personalized login information during the month of August. To learn more about Synergy, view the parent flyer here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1di8RXDu078ohVJp2LmxcblajSIYmbMe/view?usp=drivesdk>

myMCPS CANVAS CLASSROOM

Last spring, there were 2 virtual classroom platforms being utilized: Google Classroom and myMCPS Classroom. This fall, **all** schools in MCPS will utilize the myMCPS Canvas platform during the 2020-2021 school year. From teaching and learning to community outreach to professional development, myMCPS Classroom is the next generation digital learning environment for staff, students, and parents! To log into myMCPS Classroom visit www.mcpsmd.instructure.com. For a tutorial on logging in and accessing course content, please click here: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1baFKE6ydtv5u_dNd_AjK80qyGueNIHNsOZapRDsVX8/edit?usp=sharing

ZOOM TIPS & TRICKS

As we prepare for a virtual start to the school year, families are encouraged to become more familiar with the Zoom meeting platform. Check out some helpful resources here:

- Zoom Help - English: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-GRxncqUaary6pLr_VWrg7fBnmai4lZ2pT8VvpNEXg8/edit
- Zoom Help - Spanish: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cJl1vhHOjexiu4UO_B9SbdkZe5sp9IzL/view?usp=sharing
- Zoom Cheat Sheet - English: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1k-1Rx2vKJYQ-XU4j2U-QOjuAO95dvNK8/view?usp=sharing>
- Zoom Cheat Sheet - Spanish: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dJDkwJL-RKtqiVxbyfoP25CZwxHOp9Xv/view?usp=sharing>

Supply List

We anticipate MCPS sharing a universe supply list for all elementary schools. This list will include basic supplies that a student may need to have a successful virtual learning experience. We will be providing updated Chromebooks, math books, and literacy materials for all students during our distribution process. This [supply list](#) was approved in the event that we returned to the school building for in-person learning. It may help you to determine what types of supplies your child may want/need at home. We will provide additional details as they become available.

Generation Z

The Generation Z Tutoring Club at Richard Montgomery High School is recruiting students to be tutored online during the 2020-2021 school year. Our services are free of charge and open to students of all grade levels. We would like to make the process of online learning easier for students, and support them in their journey this year. All of our tutors are highly qualified Richard Montgomery High School students. Tutoring takes place online this year and we offer a variety of subjects. For more information, or to complete a registration application, visit: https://docs.google.com/document/d/17_FOGFJKPoeNAhH2DHFaKHEVJHp1P3MjGWRuMpbbyZl/edit.