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August 2019

Dear Cedar Grove Elementary School Families,

The summer has flown by, and it's almost time to begin the 2019-2020 school year. We are looking forward to the new year and to all of the possibilities it brings. We hope you are too. I'm especially excited to share information about two new programs coming to Cedar Grove this year.

First, as part of the Montgomery County Public Schools' (MCPS) initiative to expand its world languages program offerings, all of our kindergarten students will learn beginning Spanish this year through a combination of lessons led by trained volunteers and practice through an online platform. We've heard positive feedback from the schools that piloted this program last year, and we hope to expand it to additional grades in future years. The MCPS World Languages Office has been working with a wide variety of individuals and organizations to recruit and train volunteers for the program, but we would love to have one of our own parents serve in that role. If you are interested, please review the [information about the program](#) and let me know.



On a larger scale, we are excited to begin the school year with our newly adopted math curriculum, *Eureka Math*, for all students in grades K-5 (except for those enrolled in Math 4/5 and Math 5/6). The *Eureka Math* curriculum was created by Great Minds, a nonprofit that brought together teachers and experts to craft a program based on the world's most successful math programs. *Eureka Math* was built around the core principle that students need to know more than just what works when solving a problem – they need to understand why it works.

Eureka Math is designed to support students in gaining a solid understanding of concepts, a high degree of procedural skill and fluency, and the ability to apply the math to solve problems in and outside the classroom. There is also an intentional coherence linking topics and thinking across grades. Each lesson that students engage in is an extension of previous learning and foundational to future learning. *Eureka Math* will also provide a high level of rigor for all students as they pursue deep, authentic command of mathematical concepts.

As teachers and students work towards building a more conceptual understanding of mathematics you might notice that *Eureka Math* teaches math differently than how you were taught in school. The *Eureka Math* curriculum goes beyond facts and formulas by teaching students to think about math conceptually. This helps students become not merely literate, but fluent in mathematics. *Eureka Math* includes excellent parent resources that we will share with you, and we are developing plans to provide opportunities for you to see and hear more about this new approach to teaching math.

All of our teachers and administrators have engaged in professional development this summer provided by *Eureka Math* trainers, and we are excited to implement it and enhance our students' learning and enjoyment of math.

Those are just two of the many things we are excited about as we begin another school year. None of that will happen without smooth operations, though. On the pages that follow is information that I hope you will find useful for the beginning of school and throughout the year:

Open House will be held on **Thursday, August 29, 2019**. This event is a chance for you and your children to meet their teachers, get oriented with the classrooms, catch up with old friends, and make new ones. Teachers will be sending postcards to all of their new students early that week, and staff will be on hand to help you locate your children's classrooms. We will continue to hold two sessions of our Open House this year due to our limited parking situation. Please help us out by attending the session assigned below and by punctual arrival and departure to allow other families a chance to park and visit:

<u>First Letter of Student's Last Name</u>	<u>Open House Hours</u>
A-L	1:30-2:00 p.m.
M-Z	2:30-3:00 p.m.

After you visit the classroom(s), be sure to go to the All Purpose Room for the PTA Icy Pop Social for a cool treat and a chance to join the PTA and find out about all the great plans they have for the year.

First Day of School is **Tuesday, September 3, 2019**, and we are excited to see all of our new and returning students. I encourage all families to start on Day 1 the routines you will follow for arrival and dismissal throughout the year. This will make for a much smoother day and year. If you do want that first day picture of your children getting off the bus or entering the building, we ask that you drive separately, take that picture, give them a hug goodbye at the front door, and then let us guide them to their classrooms. We will have all hands on deck to ensure that everyone gets where they need to be so they can quickly get started on their day and year of learning.

School Hours this year will again be **9:25 a.m.-3:50 p.m.** The first bell will ring at 9:15 a.m. to allow students to go to their classrooms and get ready for their day. Please note that staff is not available to supervise students at parent drop-off or inside the building prior to this time, and the earliest drop-off time is 9:15 a.m.

Kindergarten Parent Meeting/Back to School Night will be held on **Wednesday, August 28, 2019, from 7:00-8:30 p.m.** School staff and PTA officers will be on hand to talk about our programs in general, and the Kindergarten teachers will provide information about school, classroom, and bus procedures as well as their instructional program. Please make every effort to attend this important meeting to ensure that the youngest members of our school family start off their school experience successfully. **Please note that this meeting is for parents only.**

Back to School Night for Grades 1-5 will be on **Monday, September 9, 2019**. Please plan to attend to hear from your children's teachers and other staff about our instructional program, ways to build the home/school partnership, and more. Because of our location and limited parking, we encourage you to carpool or take the shuttle provided by KidsCo from Potomac Valley Assembly Church located at 22901 Ridge Road, Germantown. Shuttles will begin running at 6:30 p.m.

All of these dates are included on our [school Web calendar](#).

Summer Reading and Math Challenge I hope that all of our students rose to the challenge this summer and met the goals for independent reading and math practice. Completed, signed Reading Bingo Cards and Math Calendars are due to homeroom teachers by the end of our first week of school. I look forward to celebrating the commitment to year-round learning with participating students.



PTA Picnic and Color Fun Run Save the date for the annual PTA Welcome Picnic and Color Run, which will be held on **Friday, September 13, 2019 from 5:30-7:30 p.m.** Please join us for this fun way to kick off the school year. Look for details from the PTA soon.

Visitors and Security. As many of you know, we have procedures in place to maintain building security and promote safety and accountability. Specifically, the Access Control System provides front-door security during school hours. When you arrive, please press the button to the right of the front door and wait for a signal or verbal direction from office staff.

Once you enter the building, staff in the main office will sign you into our Visitor Management System using your driver's license or other state-issued identification. Your cooperation is vital for safety and security reasons and is greatly appreciated.

Attendance/Absences - Students from ages 5 through 17 years old are required to attend school by law, and regular attendance is closely tied to school success. The only excused absences recognized by the school system are personal illness, religious observances, and significant family events, such as the death of a relative. Whenever your child will be absent or tardy, we ask that you call the school (240-740-6190) by 9:30 a.m. A voicemail system is available outside of regular office hours. Alternatively, you may use our [online absence reporting system](#) to report absences. Parents whose children are absent and who have not notified us by that time or whose children are absent for a reason other than the ones mentioned above will receive an automated message from our office. A note explaining any absence is to accompany the child upon his/her return to school.

Transportation/Arrival and Dismissal

- Buses
 - We encourage all families eligible for bus transportation to take advantage of MCPS bus transportation service as it benefits the environment while minimizing congestion and increasing safety in our parking lot. Riding the bus is also a social experience that many students enjoy.
 - [Bus route information](#) is available online. Please review the routes and stops so that your children are ready and on time at the closest stop to your home on the first day of school. All students who will be taking buses to school should do so on the first day to get accustomed to the routines and procedures. Adjustments in routes and stops are made throughout the first week of school. Please be patient with this process. Any questions about bus schedules should be directed to the **Clarksburg Transportation Office at 301-353-0815.**
 - School rules and expectations extend to the buses and bus stops, and we ask for your help in monitoring behavior at the bus stops. Please accompany your child/children to the bus stop and share in the job of supervising all students in the morning and afternoons. In addition, please remind your children of the importance of staying seated while the bus is in motion, using an appropriate voice volume, and not to consume food or drinks on the bus.
 - We will continue with our centralized dismissal plan this year, with students lining up by bus on the blacktop and then proceeding to the bus loop when their assigned buses arrive.

- Late Arrivals
 - Students arriving late or leaving early must be signed in/out by an authorized adult in the office. Please do not go directly to classrooms or other areas without checking in at the main office first.

- Car Riders
 - Parents dropping off or picking up their children can do so at the designated spot in our side parking lot. For safety, **pick-ups and drop-offs cannot take place in the bus lane in front of the school or in the lower parking lot.** See the [drop-off map](#) for details on our traffic patterns and please note that traffic flows one way and that the parking lot should be entered from the Southern entrance only. We have consulted with safety and transportation staff regarding our drop-off/pick-up process and requested facility improvements to improve it, so the process may change at some point in the future. Until then, please be sure to adhere to the established process and drive cautiously to ensure everyone's safety.
 - All car riders and walkers will exit from the main entrance and meet their parents or other authorized adults outside unless other arrangements have been made and communicated to the teacher and main office.

Changes in Dismissal Plans-Whenever there is a change in your child's dismissal plans, you must notify the school in advance **in writing**. Teachers will send students home their usual way unless we receive such notification. Students who wish to ride another bus to go on a play date, etc. must have a bus pass from the office, which we will issue after receiving your **written request**.

Custody Concerns-We are required by law to release students to any of their biological or legal parents/guardians unless we have a current legal document that states otherwise. If you have custody concerns, please communicate them to the main office immediately and provide copies of any applicable court orders.

Discipline: All families will receive a copy of the MCPS Code of Conduct shortly after the school year starts. Please review this document, discuss it with your child/children, and return the form indicating that you have done so. We appreciate your support of our efforts to maintain a safe, productive learning environment. In addition, students in all grades will receive Chromebook contracts that outline the use and care of those devices. Please review those guidelines as well and return the signed contracts to homeroom teachers.

Home/School Communication is vital for our children's success. At Back to School Night, teachers will share with you the best ways and times to contact them, and you will have the opportunity to share your contact information as well. Please check your child's backpack **daily** for newsletters and other important information. When you are in the school, check out the bulletin board next to the front door and the parent information kiosk in the front hall for additional flyers and information that cannot be distributed through backpacks.

In our continuing "green" efforts, much of our information is shared electronically. Please ensure that your child's/children's teacher(s) and the main office have current email addresses and phone numbers. [Our Web site](#) is another excellent source of information. There are also several ways for you to [stay connected](#) to MCPS and receive timely information and announcements. I encourage you to take advantage of these services.

Another way to stay connected to your child's teacher(s) and to remain informed about their classes, grades, and more is the [myMCPS portal](#). The portal allows parents to access grades, attendance data,

and classroom information quickly and easily from any device. In addition, the portal is the venue through which we share interim grades (progress reports) with parents. All families that had students in MCPS in the 2018-2019 school year were provided with information about setting up and accessing accounts. For those new this school system this year, you should have received a letter directly from MCPS about setting up your portal account. If you have not received one or need any assistance in accessing or navigating the portal, please call them main office so we can assist you.

Speaking of communication, please make note of our new phone numbers;

Main Office 240-740-6190
Cafeteria 240-740-6194
Health Room 240-740-6192

Health Matters

- **Health Conditions**, including common ones such as allergies and asthma, must be shared with school staff so we can ensure your child's safety and well-being. Please alert your child's teacher and our school nurse, who will develop a health care plan if necessary.
- **Immunizations** are required for school attendance. If your child is entering Kindergarten or is new to Montgomery County Public Schools, you must provide proof that your child is up to date with state-mandated immunizations. **Without this verification of immunizations, students may not attend school.** For more information on the immunization requirements, contact the Montgomery County Health Department at 240-777-1520.

Medications may not be administered at school without prior approval and the completion of school forms by you and your child's doctor. This regulation includes prescription and non-prescription medications. If your child will require medication or treatment during the school day, please contact our nurse as soon as possible.

School Meals Program Breakfast and lunch prices remain unchanged this year at:

Breakfast:

Regular Price \$1.30

Reduced Price \$.00*

Lunch:

Regular Price: \$2.55

Reduced Price \$.40

*Because eating breakfast has a significant impact on a student's ability to learn, the school system will continue to provide free breakfast to those students who qualify for the reduced price.

The lunch options for the first day of school are **Whole Grain Chicken Patty Sandwich with Baked Curly Potatoes** or **Fiesta Cheese Omelet with Peppers & Onions on a Whole Grain Croissant**.

I encourage you to take advantage of the convenient [computerized lunch account system](#) by depositing money in your children's accounts and making sure that they know their Personal Identification Numbers (PIN). For returning students, PIN numbers remain the same, and any account balances left from last year are still available. Parents will receive notification when account balances are low, and all money borrowed from the cafeteria must be repaid promptly.

Free and reduced lunch applications will be distributed during the first week of school. It is critical that these forms be completed fully and accurately and returned to school promptly. Students who qualified for these programs last year must reapply by **October 16, 2019**.

Enrollment and Staffing

Following our boundary change, we are going into the school year very close to projections, with our total school enrollment at approximately 415 students. In general class sizes are low throughout most grades, with some variance depending on specific levels and courses.

Please Welcome New Staff Members:

Staff Member	Position
Sydney Abramson	Paraeducator
Carol Blankenship	Paraeducator
Sandi Garcy	ESOL Teacher
Cecilia Grey-Theriot	Paraeducator
Patricia Lechluder	Paraeducator
Kara Phillips	Resource Teacher
Jean Pierce	Paraeducator
Cheryl Smoker-Arellano	Music Teacher
Bethany Ventura	Grades 2/3 Teacher
Connor Wills	Grades 3/4 Teacher

We have also had a few staff members change their positions at Cedar Grove:

- Monica Doyle-moving from Grade 5 to Grade 3
- Mari Haynes-moving from Grade 1 to Grade 3
- Mike Moxley-moving from Grade 4 to Grade 5

A complete [staff directory](#) is available online.

We are always seeking a few excellent **lunch hour aide substitutes**. The people filling these important positions must have a love of and respect for children; an understanding of developmental needs and group dynamics; and a healthy tolerance for controlled chaos. If you are willing to serve your school in this way while earning a little money, please contact [Mrs. German](#).

Safety Patrols are expected to be at their posts on time on the first day of school. If you have any questions about these assignments, contact [Mr. Jansson](#), our patrol sponsor. Patrols should see Mr. Jansson on the first day of school to receive their belts.

Birthdays will be observed at school through recognition on the morning news show and a small gift from the main office. We will not be having birthday parties or sharing treats sent from home, as these bring with them concerns about equity, allergies and other medical conditions, cultural preferences, disruption of instructional time, and time demands on staff.



MCPS GIVE BACKpacks Campaign Parents, staff, and the MCPS community are encouraged to support the MCPS GIVE BACKpacks campaign, which raises money to buy backpacks filled with school supplies for students in need.

A \$10 donation will provide a student with a new backpack filled with school supplies. Individuals also have the option to give in any other amount they choose. Visit www.mcpsgivebackpacks.org to learn more or to donate.

One of the best parts of working in education is the excitement and enthusiasm that each new school year brings. This year is no exception, and I am eagerly anticipating the start of school and all the promise that accompanies it. Cedar Grove is a special place where students thrive, thanks to the combined efforts of our dedicated, talented staff and a community that values and supports education. That includes our PTA, of course, and I hope that every family will become members of this great organization and contribute to the great things they do for our school and students. Please see the message from [our PTA President Mrs. Jessica Carter](#) and join!

I look forward to seeing you soon and to partnering with you throughout the year to make it a great one for our children.

Sincerely,

Lee F. Derby
Principal

Follow me on Twitter: [@PrincipalDerby](#)

Helpful Links:

- [Bus Information](#)
- [Cedar Grove Calendar](#)
- [Breakfast and Lunch Menus](#)
- [Grade Level Supply Lists](#)
- [MCPS Calendar](#)
- [PTA Welcome Letter](#)

