August 9, 2019

Dear Flower Valley Families,

Welcome to the 2019-2020 School Year!

I hope you found time this summer to relax and enjoy quality time with family and friends. We have been busy here at Flower Valley preparing class lists, ordering materials, planning for instruction, hosting a special education summer school program, and cleaning the building for the return of the children.

As I look forward to the start of school on Tuesday, September 3, 2019, I would like to extend a warm welcome back to our returning families and a special welcome to all the new Flower Valley families. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to help you become more comfortable with our wonderful school. My staff and I are looking forward to building and nurturing positive and productive relationships with all families, as we work with you and your children this school year.

Our current school enrollment is 515 students. We plan to have four classes each in Grades K, 1, and 3 and three classes in Grades 2, 4, and 5. Two Grade 5 classes will be housed in portable classrooms this school year. The portables are adjacent to our Grade 4/5 hall. This staffing plan is based on current enrollment information and is subject to change.

**New Staff Members:**

Please welcome the following new staff members, each of whom is highly qualified, enthusiastic, and eager to join our Flower Valley school family:

* Ms. Rachel Casey, Grade 1 teacher (New allocation)
* Ms. Madison Fleischner, Grade 2 teacher (Replacing Ms. Gondhalekar who moved to Gr. 4)
* Ms. Jill Kanowith, Instrumental Music teacher (Replacing Ms. Padilla)
* Ms. Nicole Keller, Social Emotional Special Education teacher (Replacing Ms. Orzel)
* Ms. Michelle Joseph, Grade 3 teacher (New allocation)
* Ms. Christina Putman, Principal Intern (Replacing Dr. Ross)
* Ms. Padma Radhakrishnan, Administrative Secretary (Replacing Ms. Velez)
* Ms. Colleen Smith, Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM) teacher (New allocation)
* Ms. Rana Spurlock, Home School Model (HSM) teacher (New allocation)

**Other Staff Updates:**

* Mr. David Bunge, Grade 4 teacher, will now be our Staff Development Teacher
* Ms. Jaime Cheeks, Social Emotional Special Education Services Social Worker, will now be here full time
* Ms. Priya Gondhalekar, Grade 2 teacher, will now be a Grade 4 teacher
* Ms. Christina Putman, Principal Intern, will be training here this school year to be a MCPS principal. I am excited to have her join our staff. Attached is a welcome letter from her.

**In addition to the above staff changes, I would like to inform you of the following important school information:**

**Kindergarten Parent Meeting – Thursday, August 29, from 7-8 p.m.** If you are the parent of an incoming Kindergarten student, please plan to attend this meeting which will take place in the All Purpose Room (APR). When you arrive, please check the class lists in the school’s front lobby for your child’s class assignment. This meeting is for parents only.

**Open House – Friday, August 30, from 2-3 p.m.**

At this Open House, you and your child will be able to visit classrooms and meet teachers and classmates. That day, you will find out the name of your child’s teacher by checking the class assignment lists posted in the cafeteria at 2 p.m. Flower Valley staff members will be located around the building to help you find your destination. Please be assured that my staff and I work very hard to make sure each and every student is placed in the appropriate class and change requests will not be honored. Our PTA and school daycare provider, Kids After Hours (KAH), will also be here during the Open House to answer any questions you might have. Please note this is not the time to hold individual conferences with teachers.

If you are unable to attend the August 30 Open House, you can find out the name of your child’s teacher/room number by checking the class lists posted on the school’s front door all weekend.

**PTA Back to School Picnic – Friday, September 6, from 5:30-7:30 p.m.**

The annual PTA Picnic is a wonderful way to get to know FVES parents and children, and learn how you can get involved in our PTA. This event takes place on the playground behind the school.

**Back to School Nights – September 18 and September 19**

These events are an opportunity for parents to meet teachers and staff and learn about our instructional programs. These are important evening meetings for parents only. This year’s Back to School Nights are as follows. Both nights begin at 6:30 p.m. in the All Purpose Room (APR).

Wednesday, September 18, 2019: **Grades K-2**

Thursday, September 19, 2019: **Grades 3-5**

**Columbus Day Open House – Monday, October 14, 9:30-11 a.m.**

All parents and guests are invited to visit our school and classrooms on this morning.

**Grandparents/Special Friend’s Day - Friday, October 25, from 9:30-11:00 a.m.**

A special morning for FVES grandparents and special friends to visit our school and classrooms.

**Halloween Parade/Parties – Thursday, October 31. Parade at 2 p.m., Classroom parties from 2:20-3 p.m.**  A **Harvest Festival** will be held at the same time for students who do not celebrate Halloween.

**Principal-Parent Coffee – Friday, November 22, from 9:30-10:30 a.m.**

The Principal/Parent Coffees have been a huge success in previous years so we hope you can attend on Friday, Nov. 22. Please join Ms. Putman, Principal Intern, and me in the media center for coffee and conversation about school-related topics of interest to you and us. Unfortunately, childcare is not provided for younger siblings.

**School Hours**

Our student hours are **9:00 a.m. – 3:25 p.m**. Patrols should arrive at 8:35 a.m. All other students should arrive between 8:40-8:50 a.m. Instruction begins promptly at 9:00 a.m. Please do not send your child to school **before** 8:40 a.m. as we do not have staff available to supervise them. Students who arrive after 9:00 a.m. are tardy, and parents must sign them in at the main office before students can go to class. I will be monitoring students who are consistently tardy or absent, and will contact parents directly if I have concerns.

**Home/School Communication**

**Home/school communication is extremely important to me.** The more we communicate openly and honestly with each other, the more successful our children will be at school, which is the goal we all share.

I plan to communicate with you in the following ways:

1. Sunday Night Message. You will receive a phone message and/or email from me or Ms. Putman every Sunday night at 7 p.m. that will highlight upcoming school events and other important messages.
2. Twitter. Follow us @FlowerValleyES and @FVPrincipal for the latest information on teaching and learning at our school.
3. School website. Up-to-date school information and photos will be posted here.

**Lunch/Recess Schedule**

We will have three lunch/recess periods this school year. Our lunch/recess schedule is as follows:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grade(s)** | **Recess (40 min.)** | **Grade(s)** | **Lunch (30 min.)** |
| Kindergarten and 1 | 12:20–1:00 | Kindergarten and 1 | 1:00-1:30 |
| 2 and 4 | 11:10-11:50 | 2 and 4 | 11:50-12:20 |
| 3 and 5 | 11:45-12:25 | 3 and 5 | 12:25-12:55 |

**School Visitors/Drop-off Table**

All parents, visitors, and volunteers must enter the building through our front door. Our front door is an Access Control Door and is locked at all times. Once in the building, please check into the main office where you will be asked to present your driver’s license. Your license will be scanned and a visitor’s badge will be issued, which you need to wear while in the building. In addition, it is not appropriate for parents or visitors to “drop in” on a classroom when teachers are instructing to deliver messages or drop off lunches, instruments, or homework as this is a disruption to instructional time. Items need to be left at the **drop off table** outside the main office. We will be sure your child gets his/her items in a timely manner.

**First Week of School**

While I understand that it may be difficult to part from your child on the first day of school, please say your goodbyes at the entrance doors and then allow him/her to walk into the school alone. If your child is a bus rider, it is best for him/her to ride the bus on the first day. This allows for a smoother start to our school routines that are established on the first day of school. We will have staff located throughout the building, at car drop off, and the bus lanes, to help your child enter the building and locate his/her classroom. Thank you for your cooperation.

**Summer Reading and Math Assignments**

Hopefully all your children have been reading and practicing math skills this summer. Our summer reading and math assignments are posted on our school’s website or paper copies are available in the school office. Students who complete and return these items to their classroom teacher by Friday, September 13 will get a prize.

**MCPS Cell Phone Policy**

MCPS elementary school students are not allowed to have cell phones at school without prior permission from the school principal. If you believe your child needs to carry a cell phone, please send a letter or email to me explaining the circumstances and requesting an exception to this policy.

**Thank you to the following FVES Staff Members**

Preparing for the new school year takes a team of people and I am lucky to work with such a dedicated group who has diligently worked with me all summer to prepare for the arrival of all your children on September 3. Many thanks to **Ms. Putman,** Principal Intern, **Ms. Radhakrishnan**, Administrative Secretary**, Ms. Sintetos,** Attendance Secretary**,** and our entire building servicesstaff **(Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Tarawally, Ms. Kim, and Mr. Hawkins).**

Our entire staff is looking forward to working with you in the upcoming school year. Enjoy the last few weeks of summer and see you soon.

Sincerely,

Gay E. Melnick, Principal