DAMASCUS HIGH SCHOOL

25921 Ridge Road
Damascus, Maryland 20872

240-207-2400 Fax: 301-253-7046

August 5, 2022

Dear DHS Students and Families,

I hope that you have found opportunities for both rest and adventure this summer! On behalf of the entire Damascus High School staff, I extend a heartfelt welcome to the approximately 1,440 students of the class of 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026. We are confident that this will be an incredible 2022 - 2023 school year at DHS. Our Damascus community is like no other.

Our Instructional Leadership Team collaborated this summer to determine our instructional focus and next steps to continue to foster our environment of academic excellence and commitment to equity in a virtual environment. Our work was driven by our DHS Core Values:

DHS is Swarmin' with P.R.I.D.E.

Personal Accountability and Integrity
Respect and Relationships
Inquisitive Thinking
Dedication to Equity and Inclusion
Excellence in Academics

Below is information that will guide you as you prepare for the school year. We will be sending out weekly communication through Synergy every Sunday afternoon. Please make sure that your contact information is updated in the myMCPS Parent VUE. If you have difficulty with activating accounts, or if you do not receive a communication, please contact the help line at **240-740-7023.** Please click here to provide us with important feedback about how we can best support you and your student here at DHS.

PARENTS and GUARDIANS of FRESHMEN and New Students are encouraged to attend our New Parent Orientation on **Wednesday, August 24th from 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM**.

ALL NEW STUDENTS are encouraged to attend our New Student Orientation on **Thursday, August 25th from 7:45 AM - 11:30 AM**. Bus transportation will be provided to and from the school.

The FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL is Monday, August 29, 2022. We will begin in homeroom on the first day of school. Please use **this link** to find your homeroom teacher. On 8/29/22, all students will report to your homeroom teacher to receive your Semester 1 schedule.

Supplies and Chromebooks
All students will be responsible for bringing their MCPS issued Chromebook to and from school daily. We will be distributing Chromebooks to students who need them during Advisory/Homeroom during the first week of school. Individual teachers will let students know if they need other supplies for their class.

Virtual Learning Tools
In order for schools to safely use certain online digital tools (ODTs) with students or student data, MCPS has requested that all schools obtain affirmative parental consent before instructing students to create an account, log in, or supply personally identifiable information (PII) to these tools.

To that end, we have created this Online Digital Tools Consent Form for the 22-23 school year. The ODTs listed on this consent form were selected because they stood out as being the ODTs with the highest utilization by students. **Please complete this Consent Form prior to the first day of instruction, Monday, August 29, 2022.** For more information on ODTs, their classifications, and the standards each app is vetted against, please visit the MCPS Data Privacy Website.

LIM Survey
As you know, our school is implementing a whole-school transformational process called the Leader in Me, which teaches 21st-century leadership and life skills to students and creates a culture of student empowerment based on the idea that every child can be a leader. Our school will be conducting surveys to learn more about key areas of strength and areas of needed growth in our school. In order for us to have a holistic picture of what is going on in our school, we are asking all full-time staff members, parents/guardians, and students to participate.

As a DHS community member, we are asking you to complete the survey (without sharing your name or other identifying information) that is linked below. The survey is completely voluntary, but we do hope to get feedback from as many community members as possible.

The parent/guardian survey takes about 12 minutes to complete and will ask questions about your student and about their experience in our school. If you have more than one student attending the school, you will be asked to think about the oldest student's experiences as you answer questions related to their growth.

DHS parent/guardian survey: https://www.leaderinme.com/s/damascus-high-school/families
Please complete the survey by August 23rd, 2022.

ATHLETICS
We will hold our "fall" meet the coaches night on August 25th, at 6:30 PM, in the auditorium. The general session will be followed by breakout sessions for each individual sport. This meet the coaches night is only for students participating in a fall sport. Please visit our athletic website for additional information involving EVERYTHING DHS athletics related.

The **SCHOOL WEBSITE** will continue to be updated as we receive information for the 22-23 school year. Please check this link for 'Back to School' information.

DHS PTSA News
Your PTSA is already hard at work preparing for this year. Over the next couple of weeks, you will receive emails directly from us about how and why to join the DHS PTSA this year and we hope you will - whether you are a new member or a returning member! We also hope you take advantage of the popular option of joining both the PTSA and the Athletic Boosters Club at the same time, earning a $10 discount on joint membership dues. *Why join the PTSA?* Our membership drive is our largest fundraiser which allows us to continue supporting programs for our students, teachers, staff, and the school. Over the last couple of years, the PTSA actively led the charge to update our antiquated building, resulting in DHS not only receiving short term fixes, but also obtaining approval for a major capital project with a completion date of September 2026. We look forward to supporting our DHS students, staff and teachers during this challenging year and you will help us do so!

Ready to Join?

- Connect to AtoZConnect using this new link: https://dhsptsa.membershiptoolkit.com/.

• Click "Create Account" under New User (AtoZ has upgraded its platform so everyone will have to Register even if you have used the old platform in the past.) Complete the form on the next page and click "Verify My Email"

• Check your email for a message from the Damascus High School PTSA asking you to verify your email and complete the process to Register.

• TO JOIN, click on the "Membership" link in the green box on the left side

• Select a membership option. To join both the PTSA and Boosters Club for a $10 discount, select either "Joint DHS PTSA DUAL Adults + DHS Athletic Booster Club: Family Membership" (which will provide you with a PTSA membership for two adults) OR " Joint DHS PTSA SINGLE Adult + DHS Athletic Booster Club: Family Membership" (which will provide you with a PTSA membership for one adult)

• Follow the prompts to add it to your cart and pay for your membership using your PayPal account

• Questions? Email membership.dhs@gmail.com

• You can also go through the information under "My Account" (in the green box on the left side to confirm your information and what you would like available for others to see in the directory.

• **To join via our paper form** – print, complete and turn in your form with a check made out to DHS PTSA. You can bring it to Back to School Night or mail your form and payment to DHS PTSA, 25921 Ridge Road, Damascus, MD 20872. The form can be found on the DHS website: https://www2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/siteassets/schools/high-schools/a-j/damascushs/uploadedfiles/dhs-2021-22-ptsa-boosters-membership-form-aug-2021.pdf

COLLEGE AND CAREER CENTER

Juniors and Seniors are welcome to attend College Visits in the College and Career Center. The college visits schedule will be updated here and students will also receive email reminders for upcoming visits. Visits will take place during the first 30 mins of the scheduled period.

Seniors are encouraged to visit the College and Career Center (Room 133) during lunch for assistance on their college applications or send Ms. Burkhalter an email with any questions or concerns (Nicole_D_Burkhalter@mcpsmd.org). Please visit the College and Career site to view the slideshow presentations from the Summer workshops. These will provide valuable information as you begin this process.

Fall Events *Parents are welcome to attend!*
College Application Night: Monday, September 12th at 6:00pm in room 120
Montgomery College Financial Aid Outreach: Thursday, September 26th at 5:30pm (virtual)
This event is for all Seniors even if they do not plan to attend MC.
Financial Aid Night: Monday, October 3rd at 6:00pm in room 120
FAFSA Night: October (Date and time TBD) in the Media Center

This school year we will welcome **19 NEW STAFF MEMBERS**. We are very excited about our new hires and are confident they will exceed our expectations.

Ms. Kendra Brownlow	Special Education Paraeducator
Mr. Joseph Bryan	Paraeducator
Ms. Elizabeth Burke	Art
Mr. TJ Budd, Jr.	Building Services Manager
Mr. Antonio Evans	Building Service Worker
Mr. James Grandner	Physics
Ms. Ranjeet Kaur	Paraeducator

Ms. Pamela Krawczel	Principal Intern
Mr. William Krop	Special Education SCB Teacher
Mr. Ayao Sossou	Paraeducator
Mr. Kenneth Mckinney	Media Services Technician
Ms. Caitlin Patrick	English
Ms. Lygia Helena Lopes Podavin	Building Service Worker
Ms. Emily Prather	Special Education Math Teacher
Mr. Anthony Plummer	Preventive Maintenance Specialist
Ms. Heather Stadtler	Special Education English Teacher
Mr. Victor Suarez	Building Services Assistant Manager
Mr. Travis Swiger	IT Systems Specialist
Ms. Jessica Talley	Social Worker
Ms. Heather Trovinger	English
Mr. Rob Whittles	Health

I encourage you to get to know your child's teachers, counselor and administrator to support your child's success at Damascus High School. Our goal is to challenge your children intellectually, grow them socially, and guide them toward independent thinking and problem solving.

Our building services team has been hard at work this summer to prepare the building for a safe and inviting return. In addition, our IT systems specialist has been working on system updates/upgrades, coordinating with appropriate staff on our IT related projects noted below, and providing tech support to our summer school programs.

In preparation for the 22-23 school year, we also have a few projects being completed to improve functionality and technology in some spaces. These projects include:

- Wireless Access Upgrades– Our wireless access points are being updated throughout the building, including strengthening areas which previously had poor connectivity.
- Promethean Board Removals – Approximately 50 of these boards are being removed in spaces that received the new Boxlight technology this past year.
- Office to Classroom Conversion – In order to increase our math instructional space, we are converting a math office to a classroom. This includes the removal of some built-in lab workstations to create additional room for student desks.
- Outdoor Seating – Thanks to funding from the SGA, SERT/Green Schools, and our previous Giant program funds, we were able to add (4) picnic tables and (1) bench to our courtyards and outdoor areas.
- Wellness Center – An existing storage room and our former health room triage area are being converted to a Wellness Center. MCPS, in partnership with the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), has made a commitment to expanding wellness services across all MCPS high schools.

With these exciting upgrades, we are eager to welcome our staff and students back for the 2022-2023 school year! I look forward to working with all the wonderful students, parents, and stakeholders of Damascus High School. Best wishes and enjoy the rest of the summer.

Respectfully,

Kevin Yates
Proud Principal

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

ADMINISTRATOR ASSIGNMENTS have changed for the upcoming year. Administrators are assigned to students alphabetically by last name. The administrator assignments are as follows:

Ms. Krawczel	A - Gn
Mr. Saltzman	Go - Oo
Ms. Brazil	Op - Z

COUNSELORS will continue to be assigned to students alphabetically by last name. The assignments have been revised slightly for the upcoming year. The counselor assignments are as follows:

Mr. Higgins	A - Cop
Ms. Stevenson	Cor - Had
Mrs. Djouha	Hag - Mac
Mrs. Kohajda	Mad - Ram
Mr. Jurado	Rap - U
Mrs. Oswald	V - Z

SUMMER ENRICHMENT Even though students do not have a specific summer reading assignment, we strongly encourage every student to read this summer. This year, MCPS partnered with Montgomery County Public Libraries to encourage all students to read. Please click here for a full description of Oceans of Possibilities, MCPL's Summer Read and Learn Program. Many AP courses have recommended and/or required summer preparation. Information about summer work was distributed prior to the end of the school year.

BACK-TO-SCHOOL NIGHT will be in person on **Thursday, September 8th, at 7 PM**. Stay tuned for more information on Back-to-School Night. There will be a Senior Parent meeting at 6 PM in the Auditorium.

SCHOOLCASH ONLINE (SCO) Montgomery County Public Schools has transitioned to a new online payment system called SchoolCash Online as its preferred method of payment for school-related fees. Please note that the new system is NOT related to school cafeteria accounts. SCO helps parents/guardians and community members pay school-related fees safely, quickly, and easily. In addition, SCO will help increase efficiency and security at schools by making payments directly into schools' bank accounts and eliminating the need for teachers/sponsors to handle money. A processing fee will be included on all items available for purchase, regardless of the type of payment used on SCO or at the school. Please refer to these registration instructions in English and Spanish for more information, including how to add students to your account and make payments. ***Parents/guardians can register now at* https://mcpsmd.schoolcashonline.com/.**

BREAKFAST & LUNCH are served daily in the DHS Cafeteria. Breakfast is served daily from 7:15 to 7:40 AM. Lunch begins daily at 11:10 AM and ends at 12:00 PM. Breakfast will be $1.30 and Lunch will be $2.80. In order to support a cleaner building, all food must be consumed in the cafeteria, in a supervised classroom, or in the courtyard (weather permitting). Eating is not permitted in the hallways. More info regarding meals can be found through this link: MCPS Division of Food & Nutrition Services. Please refer to the information on Free and Reduced-Priced Meals to review program benefits and eligibility guidelines. Beginning this school year, students who qualify for reduced-price meals will not be charged that cost - meaning that reduced-price students will eat for free! If they qualify, families are encouraged to complete the Free and Reduced-Price Meals Application. After October 12th, all students without a current year approved meal application will default to full paid status.

The **WHOLE SCHOOL LUNCH** allows time for students to receive academic support from staff, for clubs to meet and for colleagues to work collaboratively. While students are permitted in most areas of the building during the second half of lunch; roaming the building is not permitted.

LUNCH DELIVERY to students by a parent/guardian during our lunch period is permitted. Lunches should be dropped off at the Welcome Center. Food delivery by restaurants is not permitted.

> **SENIORS** and **JUNIORS** are allowed off-campus lunch privileges. Parents who would like to revoke this privilege can complete **this form**. Seniors and juniors must have their student ID to exit the building each day. This lunch privilege may be revoked at any time in response to academic concerns or disciplinary reasons.

STUDENT PARKING applications are available through this link and are due by Monday, August 15th by 3 PM. To be considered for a parking permit, a student must have a valid driver's license and be obligation free by the application deadline. Preference will be given to seniors. If there are sufficient spaces, juniors will be considered. Students will be notified of their approval status via the email address on the application. If approved, instructions on how to make payment for the $75 full-year permit (plus a processing fee), along with how to obtain the parking tag, will be included in the email. **Student parking, by permit only, will go into effect the first day of school.** Students must have an approved parking permit to park on school grounds. Security will be enforcing student parking regulations. If there are spaces remaining after school begins, additional applications will be approved through the Business Office. For further information, refer to the Parking Schedule, Parking Application, and Parking Regulations, all of which are linked here and available on the DHS Website. If you have any questions regarding the application process, please email DHSParking@mcpsmd.org. For any concerns regarding obligations, please contact Sharon_M_Weston@mcpsmd.org.

UNDERCLASS PICTURES – Pictures for freshmen, sophomores, and juniors will take place on **September 7th and 8th** through English classes. Picture order forms will be distributed prior to these dates. All students will have a picture taken even if they are not making a purchase. This picture will be used for the student ID cards and yearbook.

SENIOR PORTRAITS have been underway this summer at DHS by our photographer, Victor O'Neill Studios (VOS). If your senior has not had a portrait appointment yet, please sign-up for one of the August 16-18th make-up sessions via www.pickatime.com/vosphoto/Damascus2023. Additional information about portraits can be found on this letter from VOS. All students should be photographed by VOS for their student IDs and yearbook. There is no sitting fee for the yearbook only pose. Please note that a portion of all picture sales help support DHS. If you have any questions about senior portraits, contact VOS via seniors@vosphoto.com.

GRADUATION INFORMATION – At this time, we plan to hold graduation for the Class of 2023 on our stadium field. We will publish the date as soon as MCPS finalizes their graduation schedule. If there is inclement weather, the ceremony will be postponed until the following day. Our graduation ceremony will be live-streamed for those who are unable to attend.

2022-2023 YEARBOOK AND SENIOR ADVERTISEMENT INFORMATION – Order your yearbook early and save money! For families of seniors, consider ordering a Senior advertisement (ad). Senior ads are created by the yearbook staff to leave a lasting message for your senior. Please contact Ms. Karen Zappone at Karen_R_Zappone@mcpsmd.org for more information.

2022 Homecoming Dance and Spirit Week-This year's Homecoming Dance is on Saturday, October 15, 2022 from 8:00 p.m.-11:00 p.m in the Main Gym. Homecoming Spirit Week will take place from Monday, October 10, 2022 to Friday, October 14, 2022. For all DHS Hornets new to the Swarm, here is some information regarding DHS Spirit days. Class Colors are 9th graders: purple, 10th graders: white, 11th graders: blue, and 12th graders: red and DHS School Spirit Colors are white, green and/or gold. More specific information on class themes and dates will be announced during the school year.

GET INVOLVED! Damascus High School offers a variety of clubs and activities. Joining one or more school clubs is a great way to get involved and to meet new friends.Near the beginning of each semester, there will be a Club Fair during which you can sign-up to participate in those that match your interests.

STUDENT SERVICE LEARNING (SSL) continues to be an MCPS graduation requirement. SSL hours that have been earned by a student are now visible on the myMCPS Student Portal. SSL hours must be documented using the form https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/forms/pdf/560-51.pdf. This form can be found in the DHS Main Office or on the school website. Documentation of all SSL hours is due to Ms. Stevenson, DHS Service Learning Coordinator, according to the following updated timeline. Hours will only be accepted for the current school year.

Hours completed during the summer:	Due by the last Friday in September
Hours completed during the summer and first semester:	Due by the last Friday in January
Hours for consideration of Certificate of Meritorious Service:	Due by first Friday in April
Hours completed during the summer, first and second semester:	Due by the last Friday in June