



DAMASCUS HIGH SCHOOL
25921 Ridge Road
Damascus, Maryland 20872
240-207-2400 • Fax: 301-253-7046

August 15, 2021

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 1,400 students of the class of 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025. We are confident that this will be an incredible 2021 - 2022 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.

RETURN TO IN PERSON INSTRUCTION

We are returning to in-person instruction, five days a week, normal school hours, which are 7:45 AM to 2:30 PM. Per MCPS guidance, all students, staff, and visitors will be required to wear masks while in the building regardless of vaccination status. Please [click here](#) and [here](#) to read more about this important requirement to ensure that we are all safe. [Click here](#) for an article summarizing the vaccines required for students returning to school.

PARENTS and GUARDIANS of FRESHMEN and New Students are encouraged to attend our New Parent Orientation on **Wednesday, August 25th from 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM**.

ALL NEW STUDENTS and Returning 10th Grade Students are encouraged to attend our New Student Orientation on **Thursday, August 26th from 7:45 AM - 11:30 AM**.

The FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL is Monday, August 30, 2021. We will begin in homeroom on the first few days of school.

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 21-22 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 30, 2021.** For more information on ODTs, their classifications, and the standards each app is vetted against, please visit the [MCPS Data Privacy Website](#).

ATHLETICS is back! MCPS is bringing back our full athletic program this year. Currently, the plan is to operate "as normal" with paid spectators for all events occurring in the gymnasiums and stadiums. At this time, spectators will be required to wear masks at events taking place in the gymnasium only. We will hold our "fall" meet the coaches night on August 24th, at 6:30 PM, in the auditorium. The general session will be followed by breakout sessions for each individual 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 21-22 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! You can also find our information on the DHS website under 'Back to School Information'.

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>

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

Ms. Evelyn Aguilar	World Languages
Mr. Erwin Avila	Welcome Center Monitor
Ms. Melissa Cleveland	Transition Specialist Special Ed
Ms. Laura Cuppone	Resource World Languages and ESOL
Mr. Bob Eagleson	Social Studies
Mr. Ronald Fletcher	Paraeducator
Mr. Andre Graham	Media Service Technician
Mr. Rob Hokanson	CTE/Art
Ms. Wendy Kiang-Spray	PPW
Mr. Erick Lott	Paraeducator
Ms. Becky McGaffin	Resource Science
Ms. Julie Narum	Paraeducator
Mr. Alexandros Nickoloff	ESOL
Mr. Ayao Sossou	Paraeducator
Ms. Ute Splittgerber	Science
Ms. Unni Stokkevag	Health Room Tech
Ms. Katherine Tao	Paraeducator
Ms. Melissa Vanderslice	Art
Ms. Angel Yee	Math
Ms. Karen Zappone	English

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 updated various technologies within the building (including any necessary system updates), processed tech upgrades for designated staff, and facilitated several Chromebook distribution days for returns and trades.

In preparation for the 21-22 school year, we also have a few projects being completed to improve functionality in some spaces. These projects include:

- Horticulture Classroom Demonstration Workstation Removal -- This project was requested to increase instructional space within the classroom. A new and smaller portable demo table will replace it along with additional student workstations.
- Classroom Conversions
 - A computer lab is being converted to a traditional classroom. A few lab workstations are being removed to accommodate this conversion.
 - A few workstations were removed in our Yearbook classroom to allow for storage space to secure yearbooks awaiting distribution. The removal includes electrical, flooring, and wall repair/painting work to the area. Several locking storage cabinets were ordered and received.
- Stadium Press Box -- Due to safety concerns over an aging press box, MCPS removed the press box in the home bleachers and created a new space within the building. We were able to identify storage space in our science wing that had a great view of the stadium field. In order to provide science with additional storage space to replenish lost space, we were able to convert an upstairs office space into science storage.

With these exciting upgrades, we are eager to welcome our staff and students back for the 2021-2022 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin D. Yates". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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. Whitely	A - F
Mr. Saltzman	G - N
Ms. Brazil	O - 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 - Co
Ms. Stevenson	Cp - Fq
Mrs. Djouha	Fr - La
Mrs. Kohajda	Lb - Po
Mr. Jurado	Pp - T
Mrs. Oswald	U - 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 Tails and Tales, 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 9th, at 7 PM**. Stay tuned for more information on Back-to-School Night.

BREAKFAST & LUNCH are served daily in the DHS Cafeteria. There will be no charge for meals during the 21-22 school year. Breakfast is served daily from 7:15 to 7:40 AM. Lunch begins daily at 11:10 AM and ends at 12:00 PM. More info regarding meals can be found through this link: [MCPS Division of Food & Nutrition Services](#). If they qualify, families are still encouraged to complete the [Free and Reduced-Priced Meals Application](#) as families are able to get P-EBT funds if they are on FARMS. Current approvals will expire after the first 30 days of the regular school year. 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, gym, or media center.

STUDENT PARKING APPLICATIONS are due **Monday, August 16th 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. Obligations can be checked and paid online through [Online School Payments](#). For any concerns regarding obligations, please contact [Sharon M. Weston@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Sharon.M.Weston@mcpsmd.org). 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, 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 (August 30th)**. 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, please email DHSParking@mcpsmd.org.

The **WHOLE SCHOOL LUNCH** allows time for students to receive academic support from staff, for clubs to meet and for colleagues to work collaboratively. During lunch, all students are expected to remain in the building. While students are permitted in most areas of the building during lunch; roaming the building is not permitted. Students may not gather in the front hallway, rotunda or main office hallway during lunch.

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 who meet the established criteria and submit the permission slip signed by their parent or guardian will be permitted to leave the school campus during the lunch period. The permission slip is available on the DHS website and once completed should be turned into security for review. Once approved, the security staff will provide a sticker for the student ID card to indicate that they have the off-campus lunch privilege. Seniors must have their ID with the lunch sticker to exit the building each day. Students with off-campus lunch privileges are expected to eat during this time. They may not bring lunch back to their 5th period class. This lunch privilege may be revoked at any time in response to academic concerns or disciplinary reasons.

JUNIORS who meet the established criteria and submit a permission slip signed by a parent / guardian may earn off-campus lunch privileges during the second semester. The permission form will be available on the DHS website in January. Requests for off-campus lunch privileges for juniors will be reviewed by the security team and those that meet the criteria will be issued a sticker for their student ID. Juniors must have their ID with the lunch sticker to exit the building each day. This lunch privilege may be revoked at any time in response to academic concerns or disciplinary reasons.

UNDERCLASS PICTURES – Pictures for freshmen, sophomores, and juniors will be taken on **September 8th and 9th** 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 at DHS by our photographer, Victor O’Neill Studios (VOS). July and early August appointments have been completed. If your senior has not had a portrait appointment yet, please sign-up for the September 20th make-up date via www.pickatime.com/vosphoto/damascushs. Additional information about portraits, including safety protocols, 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, please contact VOS seniors@vosphoto.com.

GRADUATION INFORMATION – At this time, we plan to hold graduation for the Class of 2022 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 held in the Auditorium, with seating limited to two guests only. If this situation were to occur, the ceremony will also be televised throughout classrooms for the rest of our guests. Our graduation ceremony will be live-streamed for those who are unable to attend.

2021-2022 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.

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. Early this fall, there will be a virtual school clubs 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. Loulou, 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