



DIAMOND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

4 MARQUIS DRIVE • GAITHERSBURG, MD 20878

PHONE: 240-740-2120 • FAX: 301-840-4506

EXCELLENCE THROUGH EFFORT!

Office of the Principal

August 7, 2023

Dear Diamond Parents and Guardians,

On behalf of the entire staff at Diamond Elementary School, we hope everyone is safe and enjoying their summer! I am excited to welcome all of you to the 2023-2024 school year. We would like to extend a warm welcome to all of our new Diamond students and their families to the school community. ***The first day of school is Monday, August 28th!***

As we prepare for the opening of the new school year, we need to make sure students have all of the necessary materials. Here is the link for student materials that each student will need to have available with them for home and school use: **Student Supply List:** [DES Student Supply List 2023-2024](#). More information on the start of the new school year can be found on page 4. Parents and students are encouraged to bring these school materials to school on the Sneak Peek event on Friday, August 25th.

The summer-time provided opportunities for various activities in the school building including summer school with nearly 125 students, City of Gaithersburg Summer Camp with nearly 75 students, and a science camp with about 40 students, including extensive cleaning throughout the building for each and every classroom as we anticipate 680 students enrolled for the first day of school. All of the back to school information is in the Summer Parent Newsletter attached to this email or you can access the link: [DES Summer Parent Newsletter August 2023](#). Please be sure to read all of the information included in the attachments as some information may require your response before school starts. Pay close attention to the transportation schedule, as this will help you identify the bus routes and drop off and pick up locations. You will also see school supply lists (link above) for each grade level. Included in the attachments is a letter from me to your child. I am asking the Diamond students to write a letter to me with a description and illustration/picture of their favorite summer experiences. I will collect the letters from the students when they return to school and then I will display them on a bulletin board in the main hallway. Please feel free to make copies of the letter template if you have multiple children attending Diamond ES.

We always appreciate the wonderful support of our school community and of course the Diamond Elementary PTA. I would like to welcome back our PTA President, Candice Brown and our wonderful PTA parent executive board and volunteers. Our PTA is a wonderful resource for our school program due to the wonderful support of our incredible school family community. Please visit the revised PTA website for more information: <https://www.despta.org/home>

Our school start and end times include students can begin lining up outside on school grounds at 9:05 am, and school doors open at 9:10 am. Late bell rings at 9:25 am where students arriving to school after this time will be considered tardy. Dismissal will begin at 3:50 pm. For early release days, dismissal will begin at 1:20 pm.

In the June Diamond Mine Newsletter (<https://www2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/siteassets/schools/elementary-schools/d-g/diamondes/june-2023-diamond-mine-newsletter.pdf>) we said farewell to staff members who were moving onto new endeavors. In July we were informed that a few other staff members were moving on to new

endeavors. Mrs. Knight, administrative secretary has accepted another position in MCPS. Mr. Voigt, part-time PE teacher has accepted a position teaching PE at another school. Mr. Franklin, instrumental music teacher accepted a teaching position at a middle school in Silver spring, MD. Ms. Jordan, 4th grade teacher, has accepted another teaching position in MCPS closer to home. Mr. Carrasco, paraeducator accepted another position at another school. With such changes, brings new opportunities. We are delighted to welcome talented educators to the Diamond community. We will send an update on new additional staff before school starts. We are delighted to welcome talented educators to the Diamond community. Please join me in welcoming the following new staffing additions to the Diamond community:

- *Ms. Danielle Lee, fifth grade teacher*
- *Ms. Simran Hemnani, fourth grade teacher*
- *Mr. Jordan Kearney, third grade teacher*
- *Ms. Kelly Soderstrum, part time PE teacher*
- *Mrs. Daina Kuzmickas, full-time counselor*
- *Ms. Andrea Dailey, second grade teacher*
- *Mr. Joshua Fleming, part-time instrumental music teacher*
- *Mr. Eugene Holland, part-time building service worker*

We have several internal staffing changes and we are excited to announce new staff assignments for the upcoming school year.

- Mrs. Colleen Dahlem, previously a first-grade teacher, will be joining the second-grade team.
- Mrs. Amy Siegrist, previously a second-grade teacher, will be joining the third-grade team as the team leader.
- Mrs. Maria Casias, previously a second-grade teacher, will be re-joining the kindergarten team.
- Mrs. Katie Hageman, previously a fifth-grade teacher, will be the new staff development teacher.

Your child will receive a postcard from their new classroom teacher between August 22nd-24th. If you are out of town and/or do not receive a postcard, please call the main office on Wednesday, August 23rd after 1:30 p.m. and we will notify you of your child's teacher assignment. **On Friday, August 25th, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., students and their parents are invited to the school for our "Sneak Peek Open House."** For our 4th/5th grade students who were identified as Safety Patrol Students in the spring 2023, there will be a **Safety Patrol Meeting from 1:15-2:00 p.m. in the gym on Friday, August 25th.** Our "Sneak Peek Open House" gives students and parents an opportunity to meet their new teacher and find their classroom. Building maps will be available to help you find your child's classroom. We hope you will be able to join us as we look forward to seeing all of our Diamond families. It will be great to see the children and hear their voices echoing throughout the building after a quiet summer in the office area.

Parents of incoming kindergarteners are invited to attend the **Kindergarten Back-To-School Night presentation on Thursday, August 24th from 6:30 p.m. to 7:45 p.m.** At this parents-only meeting, kindergarten teachers will be discussing arrival/dismissal procedures, first week of school procedures, student supplies, the kindergarten curriculum, and much more! **Back-To-School Night for grades 1-2 Wednesday, September 13th at 6:30 p.m. and for grades 3-5 it is scheduled for Thursday, September 14th at 6:30 p.m.** We will send out additional information of child-care options and other school presentation opportunities.

Once again, we look forward to seeing you at the **"Sneak Peek" on August 25th**, and on the **first day of school, Monday, August 28th**! I am looking forward to an exciting school year with the wonderful students, parents, and teachers of Diamond ES! Please be sure to read all of the information included in the summer information packet. We encourage you to visit our website

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/diamondes/>, regularly for all school related information. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the school office at (240) 740-2120. Enjoy the remaining days of your summer!

Sincerely,
Daniel Walder
Daniel Walder
Principal

In addition, here is some information for parents on the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year:

- **Bus Transportation letter (English/Spanish):** [Bus Transportation Letter 2023](#)
- **What You Should Know About Riding the Bus (English/Spanish):** [What You Should Know About Riding the Bus](#)
- **Diamond ES Bus morning:** [Arrival Bus Routes Report- 2023-2024](#)
- **Diamond ES Bus afternoon:** [Departure Bus Routes Report- 2023-2024](#)
- **Student Supply List:** [DES Student Supply List 2023-2024](#)
- **Student Summer Letter:** [Summer Student Letter](#)

Elementary Fees and Supplies: Students will not be asked to pay for or provide textbooks, supplementary readers (such as anthologies, atlases, or workbooks), most materials of instruction, audiovisual aids, stationery items not commonly found in the home and required for the student to demonstrate mastery of course objectives, or building or office materials needed to operate schools.

Students may be asked to pay for materials of instruction that primarily fit into three categories as follows:

- Items eaten by the student as a part of the course (example: bread baking ingredients).
- Component *parts* of a product that will become student property (example: sculpting clay).
- Materials of instruction or items of personal use that become the property of the student (example: recorder).

We suggest that students bring individual organizational tools and personal supplies from home. In addition, there are student fees which are not course-related but local school decisions made by the principal in collaboration with the school and parent leadership. These may include fees for class snacks, special grade-level assemblies, etc. There also may be fees related to field trips, but these will be shared each time there is a trip and not in advance as a school fee.

We are committed to providing all students, regardless of their economic circumstances, with full access to the instructional program. If you need assistance for any requested expense, or with providing the organizational tools and personal supplies, please contact your child's teacher, our counselors, or school administration.

Parent donations of items that enhance the classroom experience are still welcomed, either as donations from individual parents or organized by class parents or by the PTA. A list of these items is included on the Student Supply Item Request. They are not required donations and no student will be expected to provide these items, but if you care to contribute, it will be appreciated. Teachers will communicate donation wish lists at the beginning of the school year.

Student Agenda Books: Students in grades 3-5 will be provided student agenda books for the 2023-2024 school year. The student agenda books will be distributed to students during the first week of school in their classrooms.

SCHOOL CAFETERIA NEWS: MCPS will resume regular meal services during the 2023–2024 school year. Meal prices: Breakfast—\$1.30; Lunch—\$2.55 (Elementary), \$2.80 (Middle and High) and reduced prices at all levels is no cost. Our MCPS cafeterias utilize a computerized Point of Sale (POS) system. Students utilize either an ID Card with a specialized barcode or their student ID number to access the account at mealtime. A student's Free and Reduced Meal (FARM) status is always confidential, to learn more and apply for FARMS [click here](#). Beginning school year 2023-2024, students who qualify for reduced-price meals will not be charged that cost - meaning that **reduced-price students will eat for free!** Deposits into the account can be made by any student and can be made ahead of time on our online payment system, My School Bucks (see in link below). We encourage every family to setup a lunch account just in case. Even if your child brings lunch every day, you might want them to purchase ala carte items such as milk, fruit or vegetables.

HOW TO SET UP A SCHOOL LUNCH ACCOUNT TO PURCHASE SCHOOL MEALS: click on this link for more information and directions on setting up a school lunch account: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1evfJXQ4ociAfi5uyKL1aw5_duLGB-V-x5PJgOG-Heb4/edit?usp=sharing or the MCPS link: <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/food-and-nutrition/meal-payments/>

- You can also visit the school cafeteria during Sneak Peek, Friday, August 25, 2023, from 2:00-3:00 PM to provide a check for your student’s account.

FREE AND REDUCED MEALS APPLICATION PROCESS: MUST BE RENEWED EACH YEAR:

FREE AND REDUCED-PRICE MEAL APPLICATIONS students in Maryland who qualify for reduced-price meals will not be charged for breakfast or lunch meals! Apply online NOW so that benefits will be in place when school starts! Families who meet certain federal income standards are eligible for free or reduced price meal benefits. All children use their MCPS ID number at the register so confidentiality is maintained and no child is overtly identified as receiving free or reduced-price meals. Only one application is needed for all students in a household. A new application must be completed for any family requesting assistance this school year. The online application is now open for families to submit applications. www.MySchoolApps.com. For more information and How-To videos visit the Food Services website: www.montgomeryschools.org/departments/food-and-nutrition/meal-payments/#FARMS

- APPLY HERE! www.Myschoolapps.com
- MORE INFO & How-To Videos www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/food-and-nutrition/meal-payments/#FARMS

A hard copy is available at the school. Households that complete an online application DO NOT need to submit a paper application. Paper applications will only be distributed to parents/guardians who request a paper application. Translations of the form are available in other languages through the online application.

The Diamond ES Health Room Request: The Diamond ES Health Room is running low on several sizes of clothes for our students and is looking for donations. Below you can find a list of clothes that are needed:

| Boys | Girls |
|--|---------------------|
| Size 5/6 sweatpants or drawstring pants | Size 5/6 leggings |
| Size 7/8 sweatpants or drawstring pants | Size 7/8 leggings |
| Size 9/10 long and short sleeve shirts | Sizes 9/10 leggings |
| Size 9/10 sweatpants or drawstring pants | Size 11/12 leggings |
| Size 11/12 Shirts, sweatpants, or drawstring pants | |

The Health Room is also in need of “New” underwear of all sizes. Thank you for your wonderful donations.

Annual Notification of Family Education Rights and Privacy Act:

Each year, MCPS is required by law to inform parents/guardians of the Family Education Right and Privacy Act (FERPA), which requires MCPS to give parents/guardians the opportunity to request that directory information be withheld. MCPS Form 281-13, Annual Notice for Directory Information and Student Privacy, contains the appropriate information and is available online in English, Spanish, French, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Amharic, and Portuguese.

Parents /guardians may direct the school administration not to release any or a specific part of the directory information if they return the completed form by Monday, September 11, 2023. If parents/guardians choose to change their decision at a later date, they must contact the school directly. The form remains in effect until the end of the school year on Friday, June 28, 2024.

Your school will assume you agree to the release of the directory information, unless this form is returned by Friday, September 11, 2023. If you need to change your decision at a later date, just contact your school directly. If you enroll after September 11, 2023, you can complete this form at the time of enrollment.

Annual Notification Form To Be Completed by September 11th:

<https://ww2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/forms/detail.aspx?formID=475&formNumber=281-13>.

This Form is available in English, Spanish, French, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Amharic, and Portuguese. This form must be completed every year.

ParentVue Update: Parents are asked to update all personal information on Parentvue once a year. Please log in to Parentvue and select "registration" in the upper right corner. From there, you will select "23-24 Annual Verification". This process will ensure that you are receiving emails from the school and your child's teachers. If you do not have a Parentvue account, please contact Christine Chimera in the front office. Please refer to the support guide for further information. [Parentvue Support Guide](#)

SUMMER HEALTH REMINDERS

- **School immunizations**—The Maryland Department of Health released updated school vaccine requirements for the 2023-2024 school year. Families of incoming kindergarten students, new students, and 7th and 8th graders may need additional vaccines to start the school year. For students whose required vaccines are incomplete, updated vaccine records must be submitted by the first day of school; proof of exemption or a vaccination visit must be submitted within 20 days. School staff are reviewing records and contacting families of students with incomplete vaccination records. Not sure if your student is up to date? Contact your child's health care provider or access their immunization records [online](#). Students 18 years old and younger eligible for the Vaccines for Children program may obtain free vaccines through the county's [Immunization Program](#).
- **School Health Forms**—Returning students may need certain forms if they have a health condition that requires medication, other health support or accommodations, or an emergency health plan at school (for example, asthma, food allergies or a seizure disorder). Common forms include:

- Form 525-13 (for medications to be given or available at school): [Authorization to Administer Prescribed Medication / Autorización para Suministro de Medicamento Recetado](#)
- Form 525-14 (emergency plan for severe allergic reactions): [Emergency Care for the Management of a Student with a Diagnosis of Anaphylaxis / Atención de Emergencia para Estudiantes con Diagnóstico de Anafilaxia](#)
- Form 240-23 (for food services to be aware of special diets due to an allergy or another health condition): [Special Dietary Needs Form / Formulario de Necesidades Alimentarias Especiales](#)
- Other health forms or forms in other languages are on our [website](#)

Message from Diamond ES PTA

Dear Diamond Families,

Welcome to the 2023-24 school year! We're happy to see you again and would like to give a warm welcome to the new students that are joining us this year.

Please support our PTA by becoming a member. You can sign up and pay online at [Membership](#) and explore the website to learn more about what PTA does. Memberships DO NOT carry over year to year, so even if you've signed up in the past you'll need to renew for this year.

- \$25 membership for family/guardian of student(s)*
- \$15 for grandparents/community members*
- \$10 for Diamond teachers/staff

*Membership includes a dolphin keychain, color changing pencil, and dolphin sticker. Don't miss it! It's so easy - everything is ONLINE! Find out more information at <https://www.despta.org/home>

We need EVERYONE to join! **Our goal this year is for 300 families to join the PTA.** Our membership numbers dropped the last couple of years and we don't have nearly the representation that we need to actively support our kids, the staff and teachers and our school.

PTA Membership dues pay for a lot more than just National PTA, Maryland PTA and Montgomery County Council of PTA dues - it supports the events we do for **FREE** throughout the year - school assemblies, beautification of our school exterior, staff appreciation, teacher reimbursements for supplies, events like International Night, Movie Night, Finn-Go (Bingo) Night and many more.

You don't have to volunteer unless you want to. Our goal is that all Diamond Families be a part of our voice that speaks for our children. The more numbers, the more representation. The more representation, the more we can provide our kids with what they need to be successful. So, don't delay!

Questions? Feel free to reach out to Elizabeth at membership@despta.org.

Thank you,
Candice Brown
PTA President