

Lois P. Rockwell Elementary School

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Dear Parents,

Does anyone miss snowy weather?! I was in a first grade classroom last week when it appeared like there was snow falling from the sky, but alas it was over in about 5 minutes with nothing to show for it on the ground. The children were genuinely excited then disappointed about the whole event. Perhaps we will see some snow before the winter of 2022-23 is over!

MCPS created the following information to heighten communication with families about weather emergencies:

Winter weather emergencies, such as snow and ice, may cause disruptions in school operations, including school closings, delayed openings, or early dismissals. This letter provides information about the procedures used when such disruptions occur. Also, information is provided about the weather contingency plan that would provide for makeup instructional days if the school year is disrupted by emergencies and schools are closed three or more days.

School Closing

When schools are closed system wide, all instructional programs and extracurricular activities in schools are canceled. Private child-care providers in school buildings may elect to stay open if schools are closed but administrative offices are open. In extreme conditions, administrative offices also may be closed. If this occurs, private child-care programs located in school buildings are closed as well.

Delayed Opening

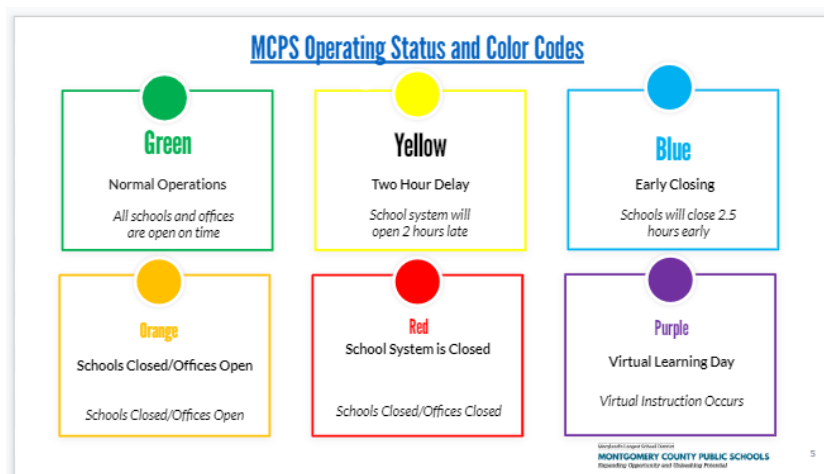
A delayed opening means that schools open 2 hours later than scheduled. All school buses operate on the same delayed schedule, and therefore, the pick-up times are 2 hours later than normal. When elementary schools open on a delayed schedule, the following programs are canceled—morning sessions of Head Start, prekindergarten, and other specialized programs or field trips scheduled before 10:50 a.m. (e.g., the Thomas Edison High School of Technology morning session). Activities that begin after 10:50 a.m. will be held as scheduled. Afternoon sessions of prekindergarten begin at the regular time. Parents/guardians should continue to check radio, television, or web announcements in the event a decision to delay the opening of schools is reconsidered and a decision to close schools for the day is made (by 7:00 a.m.).

Early Dismissal

An early dismissal means that schools will close 2.5 hours earlier than scheduled. All school buses operate on that same early schedule, and therefore, drop-off times are 2.5 hours earlier than normal. When elementary schools close early, afternoon prekindergarten and other early childhood programs are canceled, as well as any special programs or field trips scheduled after 10:50 a.m. Morning prekindergarten and morning half-day Head Start students will be dismissed at 10:50 a.m.

Virtual Instruction

In the case of inclement weather and other emergency events, MCPS will select one of the statuses described below, and communicate our status to schools and the public. While traditional snow closures will continue to exist, there are cases where the school system may enact virtual learning days. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), has opened a pathway for local education agencies (LEAs) to repurpose certain days as virtual school days in the 2022-2023 school year. To ensure meaningful and equitable virtual instruction during these days, pursuant to the Superintendent's authority under Education Article §2-303, MCPS will follow the approved virtual learning plan on days where weather events are more predictable, and staff, students, and families are given notice in advance, so they can properly prepare. Virtual learning may be a combination of synchronous and asynchronous. Virtual learning days will be determined on a case by case basis. Should MCPS decide to make a scheduled day a virtual instruction day, everyone will be informed through normal communication channels. Our school system has been busy planning and preparing for weather emergency closings with a color-coded plan that describes the six different choices for each day. Here is the overview:



These color codes will be displayed on the MCPS website dashboard to announce the status. In the event of a non-typical day, announcements will be made via local TV, Radio, and through email and text. Check out the various ways that MCPS will communicate the system's status [here](#).

The Purple status- Virtual Learning Day is new this year. Decisions about whether a day will be coded purple and students will have access to online/virtual instruction will be made with several factors considered. Here is some explanation:

On inclement weather days, there are various options for the school system's operating status, including closure and virtual

- Transitioning to virtual learning is considered when:
 - The event and its timing is **predictable**
 - As part of a **multi-day inclement weather event** (i.e. blizzard, ice storm, etc.)
 - When **prior preparation and communication** have taken place
- Many factors are considered and some events only require modifications to the operating status, resulting in a delay or early dismissal

At Rockwell, we generally keep student Chromebooks at school to be used in classes, so we have to plan for students to have Chromebooks at home for a *Purple* day. Should we have notice of an upcoming possible Code Purple day, we would send home Chromebooks with students beforehand by recording them as “checked-out” by each child. Your child will be able to access instruction on a Code Purple day on a school issued Chromebook or your own device at home. If you don't have a device and you would like to have a device at home you can request one through MCPS using the following instructions:

Request A Chromebook for at Home

We want to be sure students have access to a device at home to engage in homework, interactive resources, and in addition, potential virtual instruction if necessary on an emergency weather day:

Families can request a device using the forms linked here.

[At Home Request for Chromebook Flyer \(English\)](#)

[At Home Request for Chromebook Flyer \(Spanish\)](#)

[Chromebook Form for Families](#)

Until we get our first weather event that affects our school day, we can enjoy the mild temperatures and just dream of snow covered hills and fields! Please reach out to us if you have questions about Status Code Days, Chromebooks, or anything else. We want to keep you informed and updated as much as possible. Our goal is to continue to build upon a strong home-school connection with each Rockwell family.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Clark

Principal



Cocoa with Books



*We had an amazing time at Rockwell last Thursday! We had over 400 people at this in-person, first time ever event at Rockwell! Thank you to Mrs. Zitrick and Mrs. Epstein who led their team of teachers and specialists to put on this event. We hope you were able to enjoy the sweet treat of hot cocoa and time with your children enjoying stories read alouds by our terrific staff. Our next school sponsored Community Outreach and Engagement event will be **Breakfast with Books on Friday, March 3** before school. We will send home more information very soon about this next event.*

Kindergarten & Pre-school Education Program News

Welcome to
Kindergarten!

Kindergarten Orientation for the Fall 2023 Kindergarten Class will be held on Thursday and Friday, May 4 - 5 2023. *Current kindergarten students will not attend school on these days.* More information about registering your child for kindergarten for Fall, 2023 will be sent home very soon.


Welcome to
PRESCHOOL

We are happy to announce that we will be accepting applications for *Community Student Peers* for our Preschool Education Program (PEP) for the 2023-2024 school year. PEP offers pre kindergarten classes and services for children with disabilities ages 3-5 in an early childhood setting for children with and without disabilities. If you choose to enroll your child, he/she will be in an inclusive class with other students with and

without disabilities. Classes are 5 days per week for 2.5 hours per day. The cost is \$150 per semester or \$300 per year. The class is taught by a certified MCPS teacher. There is a para educator in the class to assist. The class follows a PreK Curriculum. **Priority is given to children that reside in the local school boundary.** Your child must be 3 years old on or before the first day of school for PEP (please check the MCPS website for the official start date. It is usually a week after school starts for grades K-5). Due to the anticipated high numbers of applicants, enrollment will be based on a lottery system. Applications will be accepted through the month of March and assignments will be made in late April. You will be contacted in late April or early May if you are awarded placement in the program. **Although a wait list will be created with the names of applicants not originally placed,** please have backup plans for Preschool, as there are a limited number of openings.

Applications are available on the MCPS website by typing "community peers" into the search box or via this link: <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/forms/pdf/335-47.pdf>



Accessing Report Cards via ParentVUE Tech Short

The *Accessing Report Cards with the ParentVUE Mobile App* tech short video provides a quick tutorial on how parents can access their child's report card using the ParentVUE mobile app.

[Accessing Report Cards with the ParentVUE Mobile App](#)



We are looking forward to our students celebrating one another and engaging in Valentine parties on Tuesday, February 14, 2023. Parties are set to begin in the afternoon. Classroom teachers will communicate exact start times directly to parents. The focus of these celebrations are to have students engage in a variety of activities together around a Valentine theme. There will be less focus on food and drink and more focus on fun times to build social skills and relationships among students and staff.

Parents (only) are invited to attend parties. Please be in touch with teachers about timing and how you could help with the party. Also plan to check-in at the office upon arrival. We can't wait to celebrate!



Each school in our district is required to conduct safety drills to practice actions that staff and students would take in the event of an emergency. We are on track to complete our required drills for the 2022-23 school year. We typically space these out through the school year to minimize the impact on our instructional program. We often get questions about Lockdown and Shelter in Place drills. Please review the *Frequently Asked Questions about School Safety and Security* at the end of this *Rockwell Register*.



Reporting Your Child Absent from School

You can report an absence using our online form located on the [Lois P. Rockwell ES website](#) under *Quick Links -> Report an Absence* or, you can call or email the office 240-740-5180 shae_j_nelson@mcpsmd.org when you call or email, please state your child's name, grade, and reason for absence. Since we are required to file written documentation from parents on absences, please follow up with a written note if you call an absence into the office. Click [here](#) for a shell for your use.

About your child's attendance: we are required to inform parents of the attendance status for students. If your child is absent 10% or more, we will notify you in writing. These attendance letters are intended to be informative. If there is further action required, we will follow up with you directly. Please know that we understand that children get sick and must stay home from school. We never expect you to send your child to school if they are ill. In fact, we appreciate you doing your part in keeping the school community healthy by not sending your child to school if they have a fever or other significant symptoms that suggest they are sick and need to rest and recover rather than being in school. If you have questions about your child's health and coming to school, please be in touch with our school health technician, Ann Blanco, [Ann C Blanco@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Ann_C_Blanco@mcpsmd.org) or 240-740-5182 for guidance.



Parents and Caregivers- Have you considered becoming an MCPS Substitute? Check out the MCPS website [here!](#)

MCPS is seeking substitute teachers! Substitute teaching is an excellent way to learn about our schools while allowing principals and teachers to get to know you.

Substitute teachers are temporary employees and are on an on call basis. An automated substitute calling system helps you manage your work schedule by allowing you to call at any time, day or night, to find jobs. This system is telephone and internet accessible. The system uses your subject area and location preferences to offer you jobs on the days you have selected and allows you to change the days you work.

Apply at: www.mcpscareers.org

School Calendar Highlights

- **Damascus Cluster PTA Meeting @ Rockwell ES: February 2- 7 PM**
- **Report Cards: February 3**
- **Valentine's Day Festivities in Classrooms: February 14- Late afternoon**
 - (Look for more information from your child's teacher)
- **Holiday- Presidents' Day (Schools & Offices closed): February 20**
- **Damascus Cluster Choral Music Concert @ DHS: February 21- 7 PM**
 - (Mrs. Looper will send information home with students)
- **PEP Classes Canceled for Professional Day: February 22**



School Safety and Security Frequently Asked Questions

What is a shelter-in-place?

A shelter-in-place is an emergency response when there is danger in the school community or near school property. It provides heightened awareness by staff of what is occurring on or in the area around the school. If the danger or threat to the school becomes imminent, the shelter-in-place prepares the school to move quickly to a lockdown. A shelter-in-place may also be utilized to hold students in their classrooms to address a medical emergency or safety situation, or in response to a biological, chemical, or radiological incident.

What actions do we take during a shelter-in-place?

- Staff lock and monitor all exterior doors.
- Classroom instruction continues.
- Staff take attendance and account for any discrepancies.
- Hallway passes or movement in hallways is limited.
- Students will not transition to classes, but will remain in their current classroom until the shelter-in-place is lifted.
- Administration will make announcements to provide safety information as needed.

What actions do staff take during a shelter-in-place?

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What actions do students take during a shelter-in-place?

- Students will continue with classroom instruction.
- Students will not transition to classes, but will remain in their current classroom until the shelter-in-place is lifted.

What is a lockdown?

A lockdown is an emergency response to a life-threatening imminent danger in or around school grounds. Exterior doors and interior classroom doors and offices are immediately locked and secured.

What actions do staff take during a lockdown?

- Sweep or scan the immediate area outside the classroom, if safe and practicable to do so, for any students and staff, and immediately bring them into their classroom.
- Staff inside the building but outside a classroom or office should go to the nearest securable location. ● Staff outside the building should go to a pre-determined safe location (identified in the school emergency plan) away from the building.
- Instruct students to move to the safest corner of the room away from doors and windows. ● Lock and secure doors.
- Cover door windows and close blinds.
- Turn off lights.
- Silence all electronic devices.
- Utilize Chromebook/laptop for attendance and communication purposes, if safe and practicable to do so.

School Safety and Security Frequently Asked Questions

- Ignore alarms and bells.
- Wait for further instructions.

What actions do students take during a lockdown?

- Move to the safest corner of the room as identified by the teacher, away from doors and windows. ● When inside the building but outside a classroom or office when a lockdown is called, students and staff should move into the nearest securable location.
- Students outside the building should follow the direction of staff and move to a pre-determined safe location.
- Silence all electronic devices.
- Follow the directions of the teacher or staff member.
- Remain silent and await further directions

As a parent/guardian, what can I do to support student safety during a lockdown? ● Keep emergency contact information updated in Synergy so that we can keep you informed. ● Have ongoing conversations with your child regarding school safety and emergency preparedness. ● Encourage your child to take drills seriously and ask staff any questions that will help them be well prepared.

- Understand that law enforcement and/or emergency responders will arrive onsite and take command of emergency situations.
- Stay calm and reassuring during any communications with your child during an emergency situation. ● Encourage your child to follow the directions of school staff in order to prevent confusion or added safety risks.
- Should school officials request parents to pick up their children, please have identification with you so that your child can be released to your custody.

How and when will I receive communication during a lockdown?

- You will receive information as soon as possible after the initiation of a lockdown. ● Our goal is to communicate within 20 minutes, with updates as frequently as possible. ● This initial information will be shared utilizing the ConnectEd system via phone call, text message, and email.

How will I receive communication after a lockdown?

- You will receive a follow-up communication providing detailed information regarding the emergency and resources available to students/parents.
- We recognize the importance of two-way communication. Please know that if you or your child has serious concerns in response to an emergency or crisis, contact your child's school directly for information and guidance.

What types of support will be available to my child following emergency situations that may potentially impact their well-being?

- Specialists in mental health, specifically recognizing and addressing trauma, will partner with the school administration to provide the appropriate services.
- Students will have full access to their counselor to support their social emotional well-being. ● We will continue to provide communication to the community as we verify information. ● Teachers will demonstrate flexibility with academic assignments such as tests/quizzes.