



DAMASCUS HIGH SCHOOL

25921 Ridge Road

Damascus, Maryland 20872

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

August 8, 2023

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 1,420 students of the class of 2024, 2025, 2026 and 2027. We are confident that this will be an incredible 2023 - 2024 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. Our work is 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 Friday 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 23th from 6:00 PM - 8:15 PM.**

All new students are encouraged to attend our **New Student Orientation on Thursday, August 24th from 7:45 AM - 11:30 AM.** Transportation will be provided and school bus schedules will follow a normal morning pick-up schedule and return students home on a three-hour early dismissal schedule (dismissal is at 11:30 AM). [Please check the DHS Website for bus route information.](#)

The FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL is Monday, August 28, 2023. We will begin in homeroom on the first day of school. Please use [this link](#) to find your homeroom teacher. On 8/28/23, 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 23-24 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 28, 2023.** For more information on ODTs, their classifications, and the standards each app is vetted against, please visit the [MCPS Data Privacy Website](#).

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.

STUDENT IDs

This year, all students must have their student ID accessible at all times. Any student who loses their ID can pay to have another ID printed. This safety measure will ensure that only DHS students have access to the school.

The **SCHOOL WEBSITE** will continue to be updated as we receive information for the 23-24 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/back-to-school-docs/dhs-2023-24-pts-a-boosters-membership-form-aug.pdf>

HOME COMING

DHS Homecoming's Glitz & Glamour: Dance for the Decades will take place on Saturday, September 30, 2023 from 7:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M. Please see our [Homecoming Hub](#) that hosts important information on schedule of events, Spirit Week and more!

This year ticket purchases for our Homecoming Dance will take place through School Cash Online from Monday, September 18th to Friday, September 22nd. All financial obligations must be cleared prior to purchasing tickets.

COLLEGE AND CAREER CENTER

Juniors and Seniors are welcome to attend College Visits in the College and Career Center. The college visits schedule for each week will be sent out on Sundays with reminders throughout the week. 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 and students are welcome to attend!*

College Application Night: Monday, September 12th at 6:00 PM in room 120

Financial Aid Night: Thursday, November 30th at 6:00 PM in room 120

STUDENT SERVICE LEARNING (SSL)

Summer is a great time for students to earn SSL hours! Make sure you are keeping track of all the wonderful volunteer opportunities students are doing over the summer. If you aren't sure if a volunteer opportunity will count toward SSL hours, please visit the SSL webpage, or contact [Mrs. Stevenson](#), the DHS SSL Coordinator.

Students must earn 75 SSL hours to meet high school graduation requirements. For more information, including how to check SSL hours, forms, and available in-person and remote SSL opportunities, please visit the [MCPS SSL website](#) or contact Mrs. Stevenson.

This school year we will welcome **12 NEW STAFF MEMBERS**. We are very excited about our new hires and are confident they will exceed our expectations.

Betsaida Anorve	Special Ed Paraeducator
April Eichorn	Paraeducator
Karen Gonzalez	Building Service Assistant Manager
Cyrus Gramatges	Media Assistant
Siria Hernandez	Special Ed Paraeducator
Kimberlee Kamensky	Special Ed Paraeducator
Olga Lopez	Building Service Worker
Michael Mueller	Math Teacher
Steven Orders	English Resource Teacher
Leanne Runkles	Main Office Secretary
Nicole Saltzman	ELD (ESOL) Teacher
Manual Zavala	Building Service Worker

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 and providing tech support to our summer programs.

We are eager to welcome our staff and students back for the 2023-2024 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 - Gog
Mr. Saltzman	Goi - Ob
Ms. Brazil	Og - Z

COUNSELORS will continue to be assigned to students alphabetically by last name. The assignments have not changed from last 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 In June, English teachers shared with students and families the summer assignments for specific English courses. You can access the [list of course-specific assignments here](#). During the first two weeks of school this fall, students will complete assignments based on their summer reading selections. MCPS has also partnered with Montgomery County Public Libraries to encourage all students to read over the summer break. [Please click here](#) for a full description of Oceans of Possibilities, MCPL's Summer Read and Learn Program. Happy reading!

BACK-TO-SCHOOL NIGHT will be in person on **Thursday, September 7th, 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 transitioned to a new online payment system last year 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 helps increase efficiency and security at schools by making payments directly into schools' bank accounts and limits the need for teachers/sponsors to handle cash/checks. A processing fee is 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.schoolcashionline.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. 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](#). Meal benefit eligibility from last school year will remain current only through the first 30 scheduled school days OR until a 2023-2024 application is processed.

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 14th 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 will also be 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](mailto:Sharon_M_Weston@mcpsmd.org).

Students who have a parking pass will be permitted to leave the building in case of a school evacuation during which parents can pick up their students. If you do not want your student to leave the building and would like to pick them up yourself, [click here](#). If you have another student who rides with the permit holder, and you give them permission to leave the building with the driver, [click here](#).

UNDERCLASS PICTURES – Pictures for freshmen, sophomores, and juniors will take place on **September 6th and 7th** 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 15-17th make-up sessions via this [Appointment Link](#). 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 2024 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.

2023-2024 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](mailto: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. 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

Health Room

The health room will be open the week prior to school reopening, and please call ahead at 240-207-2401 to confirm a good time to come in. Please be aware that parents must drop off medications for students who take medications at school. Also, be aware that the new law in Maryland allows adults age 21 and older to possess marijuana. Students are not allowed to possess tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs on school property. [Click here](#) for more information.