

# BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Darryl L. Williams, Ed.D. ♦ Superintendent ♦ 6901 North Charles Street ♦ Towson, MD ♦ 21204

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August 2021

Dear BCPS Students, Parents, and Families:

In preparation for welcoming students to the 2021-2022 school year, school teams and their central office partners have been working diligently to ensure each student enters a safe, supportive environment for learning and growth. Students will see vibrant and exciting learning spaces that will engage their academic, social, and emotional well-being. School leaders and teachers have been engaged in professional learning to accelerate each child's progress towards their academic goals. School staff have crafted School Progress Plans to address student skills in reading, writing, and mathematics and to identify action steps to support student social-emotional well-being as they transition back to school and over the course of the year. School procedures, schedules, and activities will be fully explained to all students in support of a smooth transition back to in-person instruction.

Below please find vital information related to the return of students for a new school year. Additionally, our [Reopening Plan](#) has been submitted to MSDE for feedback and posted on our website as a resource for students and families.

## **Student Information**

### ***Early Entry Day***

Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) is excited to continue Early Entry Day on August 27, 2021, for rising first, sixth, seventh, ninth, and tenth grade students. This opportunity will allow these students an opportunity to engage in team building activities, tour their school, and meet key staff in their school. More information regarding Early Entry Day will be shared by your child's school.

### ***First Day of School***

The first day of school for students in grades 1 through 12 is Monday, August 30, 2021. Our school administrators and staff are preparing for a positive first day and year-long school year. You should expect to receive instruction on the first day, as well as additional information and resources to be successful.

### ***Important Dates for the start of the 2021-2022 School Year***

- August 27, 2021 – Early Entry Day: Grades 1,6,7,9, and 10
- August 27, 2021- Virtual Orientation for Students in VLP
- August 30, 2021 – First Day of School: Grades 1-12
- September 1, 2021 – First full day of kindergarten

### ***Extracurricular Activities & Athletics***

All students are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities and/or athletics. Beginning with the first quarter, extra-curricular activities will be offered to any students who wish to expand their learning and re-engage with old friends or meet new ones. For secondary students, a full spectrum of athletic programs will be offered at the intramural and inter-scholastic levels.

### ***Academics***

BCPS staff will work to prioritize grade level content for each subject and course, diagnose unfinished learning in priority content areas including English Language Arts and mathematics, focus on academic

vocabulary to support priority standards, utilize digital materials to enhance instructional strategies, and adopt curricular scope and sequences to include opportunities for acceleration support and scaffolding of priority standards.

The expectation is that all students attend in-person and/or virtual classes daily and on time. Students should be ready for classroom discussions and activities, and be prepared for assignments, assessments, projects, and other graded activities. Schools will use multiple measures including internal (teacher or system designed) and external assessments to measure student learning.

### ***Assessments***

MSDE will provide early Fall and Spring assessments in English Language Arts, science, and mathematics and we as a system will continue with Measures of Academic Performance (MAP) reading and mathematics for students in grades 1 through 8. We are planning to host PSAT testing in October for grades 9 through 11, and SAT Day in April for grade 11. We want to encourage students in AP and IB classes to register to take the AP or IB exam in the spring and don't forget about our dual enrollment with CCBC.

If additional academic support is needed, we plan to continue to support after school tutorials and Saturday School supports for students. Please check with your local school for more information.

Continue to use the resources in Schoology and understand the grading reporting procedures for each class. Remember the dates when the marking period ends:

- November 5 – First Marking Period
- January 21 – Second Marking Period
- April 1 – Third Marking Period
- June 16 – Fourth Marking Period (May 20 for Graduating Seniors)

### **Parent Information**

Parents and guardians are vital stakeholders in our school communities and there are several ways to stay connected. Join your local PTSA or PTO and make a difference in the lives of our students. Visit the Parent University link which offers resources, videos, workshops, and system updates that can support the needs of your family. Follow Parent University on Social Media: @BCPSParentU on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

Once school begins, parents may have questions or may need to resolve an issue. The best approach is for parents to contact their child's teacher or counselor and, if unresolved, the school administrator. [Executive Directors and Community Superintendents](#) can assist parents and guardians if the issues are unresolved at the school level.

### ***Mental Health Services***

Mental health is a prevailing concern that has been exacerbated by the lived experiences of COVID-19 and social unrest. BCPS is focused on providing a tiered system of mental health supports that is bolstered by continuing to promote social and emotional learning and awareness through the third annual [Mind Over Matters \(M.O.M.\) Campaign](#). The campaign is an ongoing movement to raise awareness about mental health and promote wellness for students and staff in BCPS. Suggested activities coincide with various themes broken down by months/quarters. Members of the Mental Health Advisory Council will continue to participate in the focus on an accessible, comprehensive system of supports. Our student voices were

helpful in creating this campaign and our local school councils and student government association should be working on specific plans at each school.

School supports for students include:

- **School Counselors** - Support students in registration and completion of their 6-year plans, scheduling, and individual work with families.
- **School Social Worker** - Provide supplemental services to address student mental health needs and work within school communities to engage in meeting food insecurity needs through offerings of food pantries that included taking food to the homes of families, leading training of staff in the areas of suicide awareness, conscious discipline, adverse childhood experiences, and trauma informed care.
- **PPWs**-Coordinates attendance and individual support to assist student's engagement and returning to school.

### ***Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)***

The Division of School Climate and Safety currently partners with 19 in-school community mental health agencies to provide targeted supports to students across 175 schools and centers. While social-emotional learning (SEL) is a priority at Tier I (Universal Support – proactive, schoolwide initiatives aimed at reaching all students) to continue to build adult and student emotional literacy, the demand will be increased, and schools will be called upon to diversify their system of supports in their efforts to promote social-emotional wellness. That will be responded to by partnering with community mental health agencies for the provision of Tier III (Intensive Support – student-specific support customized to meet individual student needs) supports. Community mental health partners are appreciated for their strength and collaboration in the school community as members of the Student Support Team (SST) and tiered system of supports.

SEL has continued to expand to support a positive school and workplace climate with the expansion of professional development opportunities for staff. Opportunities to elevate adult practices in the implementation and embedding of social-emotional learning competencies, restorative practices, mindfulness, and Conscious Discipline have continued in preparation for the 2021-2022 school year. Additional resources including SEL calendars can be located on the [Department of Social Emotional Supports](#) website that includes the [Virtual Calming Room](#) where students, families and staff can explore tools and strategies for self-care in managing emotions and feelings.

Continued opportunities for professional learning have been provided to staff on various topics including mental health awareness, signs of suicide, trauma informed care, mindfulness, and youth mental health first aid. These types of opportunities will continue to be provided to increase awareness of staff in meeting the mental health needs of individuals throughout BCPS.

Each school has a Student Support Team, and members of the Student Support Teams, who serve as mental health professionals, have continued to increase their capacity to support planning, professional learning, and the expansion of resources to prepare for the return of students and their families. Additionally, prioritizing collaborative mental health supports continues to be a focus for BCPS staff. This priority promotes equal access to services and strategies provided by the community mental health providers in serving students, families, and school personnel. BCPS currently has 19 established community mental health partnerships that are approved annually to collaborate with schools towards supporting students and families across the school system community.

***Comprehensive Safety Plan***

Staff have revised existing protocols and developed new protocols in response to identified needs and gaps in providing a safe and supportive environment. Support staff have engaged in professional learning to continue to grow team collaboration in identification, assessment, and intervention to address social, emotional and behavioral needs.

***School-wide Positive Behavior Plan (SWPBP)***

During the 2021-22 school year, all schools will complete the SWPBP. The School Climate Team of each school is encouraged to meet monthly (minimum quarterly) to analyze data, evaluate implementation, and monitor the SWPBP. Staff from the Office of Psychological Services will provide supportive training during the school year. School Year 2021-2022 is the first year for the implementation of this initiative. Staff will continue to support enrollment and student attendance.

***School Resource Officers***

The Baltimore County Police Department (BCoPD) provides 83 SROs to implement a triad model of mentoring, teaching, and law enforcement. At least one SRO has been assigned to each secondary school and rotating SROs are assigned to elementary schools, one officer for each of the ten precincts serving schools within the boundaries of the precinct. This additional support to our schools provides many opportunities for our SROs to build positive relationships with our students.

***COVID-19 Response and Mitigation***

A comprehensive plan for COVID-19 prevention and mitigation has been developed and is updated as needed based on changes in guidance, disease prevalence, and/or vaccination statuses. The plan is summarized in ***Safety is Our True North***, which is posted on BCPS' COVID-19 website and accompanied by a variety of supportive materials and data. To continue informing staff about COVID-19 mitigation strategies and provide updates as new information is received, all school-based staff will view a 20-minute training video that highlights the system's prevention and mitigation plan. This will take place on August 23, 2021.

Team BCPS staff have been working hard to prepare the best environment possible for all students. Together- staff, students and families- we will make this a great year for Baltimore County students!

Sincerely,

Darryl L. Williams, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

Christina Byers  
Community Superintendent

Racquel Jones, Ed.D.  
Community Superintendent

George Roberts, Ed.D.  
Community Superintendent

Michael J. Zarchin, Ed.D.  
Chief, School Climate and Safety