

August, 2009

Dear Cedar Grove Elementary School Families,

Although it almost seems as if our wonderful students and staff just walked out the door, it's almost time for them to return to start the 2009-2010 school year. While summer is a great time for rest and relaxation, I'm looking forward to August 31, when our halls will once again be bustling with smiling faces and our classrooms will be filled with fun and learning. I also look forward to the continued collaboration between our staff and community that provides such a special learning environment and strong instructional and extracurricular programs for our children.

As much as I long for the familiar routines, I am also aware that change is constant in education -- especially this year at Cedar Grove. Whether you are new to us this year or a family that has a long association with Cedar Grove, you will be surrounded with new faces. We will continue the work we started last year to make everyone's transition into this new school year and school community a smooth one. By preserving some of our cherished traditions and programs while welcoming fresh ideas, we hope to provide both stability and flexibility and ensure that every member of our school family feels important and valued. This year more than ever your input and participation are critical, and I am eager to work with you throughout the year and for years to come.

Below is information that will help us all have a smooth start to the 2009-2010 school year. Let's make it a great one!

**Open House** will be held on Friday, August 28, from 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. This event is a chance for families to meet your children's teachers, get oriented with your classroom, catch up with old friends, and make new ones. School staff will be on hand to help you locate your children's classrooms. Teachers will be sending postcards to all of their new students early that week. **Summer packets** should be turned in at the Open House.

**New Family Welcome** for students and families attending Cedar Grove for the first time, including Kindergarteners, will be held in our All Purpose Room just prior to the Open House on Friday, August 28, from 1:15 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. At this meeting, school staff and PTA representatives will share information and let you know about the different ways you can be involved in our activities, programs, and leadership. Some of our returning upper grade students will also be on hand to conduct school tours.

**First Day of School** is Monday, August 31, 2009. School hours remain the same this year; 9:15 a.m.- 3:30 p.m.

**Kindergarten Parent Meeting/Back To School Night** will be held on **Thursday, August 27, from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.** School staff and PTA officers will be on hand to talk about our programs in general, and the Kindergarten teachers will provide you with information about school, classroom, and bus procedures as well as their instructional program. Please make every effort to attend this important meeting to ensure that the youngest members of our school family start off successfully. **Please note that this meeting is for parents only.**

**Back To School Night** will be on **Thursday, September 10, 2008, for Grades 1-5.** (As noted above, the Kindergarten back To School Night is Thursday, August 27, 2008.) Back To School Night will be held from **7:00 - 8:30 p.m.** Please plan to attend to hear from your children's teachers and other staff about our instructional program, ways to build the home/school partnership, and more. We'll send out more details as this event draws near.

**Attendance/Absences** - Students from ages 5 through 16 are required to attend school; regular attendance is closely tied to school success. The only excused absences recognized by the school system are personal illness, religious observances, and significant family events, such as the death of a relative.

Whenever your child will be absent or tardy, we ask that you call the school (301-253-7000) by 9:30 a.m. of the day in question. An answering machine is available outside of regular office hours. Parents whose children are absent and who have not notified us by that time or who are absent for a reason other than the ones mentioned above will receive an automated message from our office. A note explaining any absence is to accompany the child upon his/her return.

**Custody Concerns**-We are required by law to release students to any of their biological or legal parents/guardians unless we have a current legal document that states otherwise. If you have custody concerns, please communicate them to the main office immediately and provide copies of any applicable court orders.

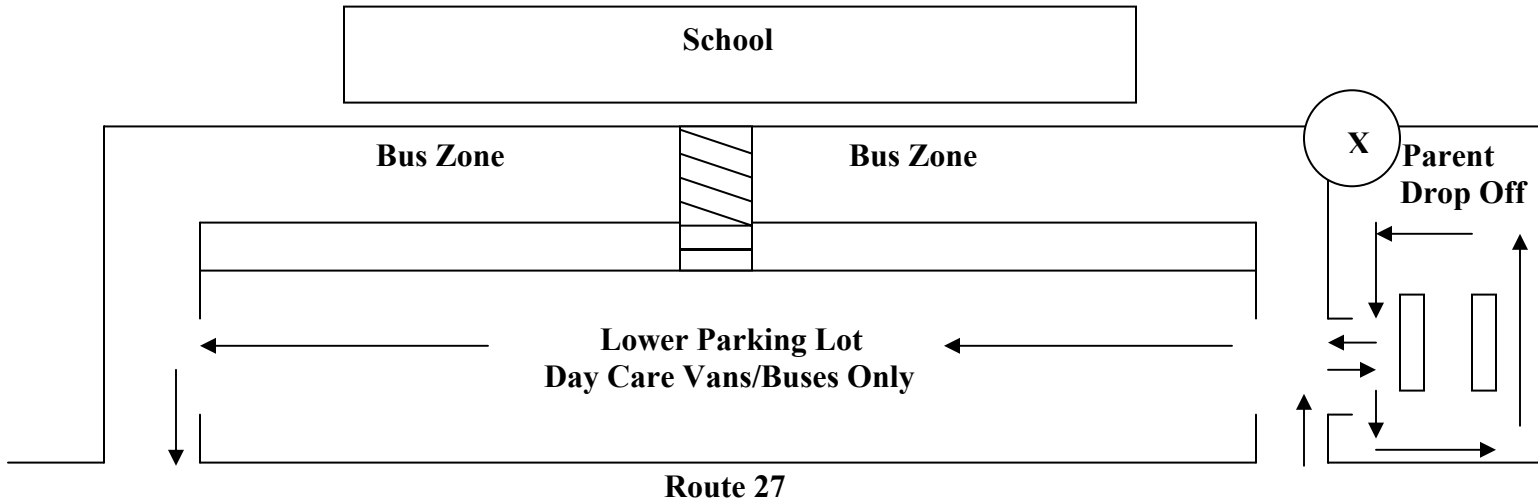
**Home/School Communication** is vital for our children's success. At Back To School Night, teachers will share with you the best ways and times to contact them. Please check your child's backpack regularly for newsletters and other important information. When you are in the school, check out the parent information kiosk in the front hall for additional flyers information that cannot be distributed through backpacks. Additional information can be found on the web at:

<http://montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/cedargroves/>

**Visitors** are always welcome. When you come to school, please make sure to use the front entrance only, sign in on the visitor log (and on the PTA laptop if you are volunteering), and obtain a nametag to wear throughout your stay. Your cooperation is vital for safety and security reasons and greatly appreciated.

### Transportation/Arrival and Dismissal

- Bus information is attached. Please review the routes and stops so that your children are ready and on time at the closest stop to your home on the first day of school. All students who will be taking buses to school should do so on the first day to get accustomed to the routines and procedures. Adjustments in routes and stops are made throughout the first week of school. Please be patient with this process. Any questions about bus schedules should be directed to the **Clarksburg Transportation Office at 301-353-0815.**
- School rules and expectations extend to the buses and bus stops, and we ask for your help in monitoring behavior at the bus stops. Please accompany your child(ren) to the bus stop and share in the job of supervising all students in the morning and afternoon.
- Whenever there is a change in your child's dismissal plans, you must notify the school in advance in writing. Teachers will send students home their usual way unless we receive such notification. Students who wish to ride another bus to go on a play date, etc. must have a bus pass from the office, which we will issue after receiving your written request.
- Students arriving late or leaving early must be signed out by an authorized adult in the office. Please do not go directly to classrooms or other areas without checking in at the main office first.
- Parents dropping off or picking up their children can do so at the designated spot in our side parking lot. For safety, **pick-ups and drop-offs cannot take place in the bus lane in front of the school or in the lower parking lot.** See the map below for details on our traffic patterns and please note that traffic flows one way and that the parking lot should be entered from the Southern entrance only.



**Discipline:** All families will receive a copy of the school's discipline policy and procedures during the first week of school. Please read this carefully with your child and return the form indicating that you have done so and support our efforts to maintain a safe, productive learning environment.

**Cell Phones**-MCPS policy prohibits elementary school students from carrying cell phones. Waivers to this policy may be granted in exceptional circumstances. If you would like to request such a waiver, please make an appointment to discuss that request with me.

**School Meals Program** information is attached. Prices for this year are:

<b><u>Breakfast:</u></b>	<b><u>Lunch:</u></b>
Regular Price \$1.30	Regular Price: \$2.50
Reduced Price \$ .30	Reduced Price \$.40

The lunch choices for the first week are **Monday** – Chicken Nuggets/Gardenburger, **Tuesday** – Personal Pizza/Hamburger, **Wednesday** – Chicken Patty/Cheese Dippers, **Thursday** – Pancakes/Grilled Cheese, **Friday** – Pizza Wedge/Turkey Frank/

I encourage you to take advantage of the SNAP program by depositing money in your children's accounts and making sure that they know their PIN numbers. Parents will receive notification when account balances are low. Students will be allowed to borrow money twice. On the third day without money in a SNAP account, the child will be given a peanut butter sandwich or other alternative lunch. All money borrowed from the cafeteria must be repaid promptly.

Free and reduced lunch applications will be distributed during the first week of school. It is critical that these forms be completed completely and accurately and returned to school promptly so that eligibility for these programs can continue beyond the month of September.

### **Health Matters**

- **Health Conditions**, including common ones such as allergies and asthma, must be shared with school staff so we can ensure your child's safety and well being. Please alert your child's teacher and Mrs. Kemp, who will develop a health care plan if necessary.
- **Immunizations** are required for school attendance. If your child is entering Kindergarten or is new to Montgomery County Public Schools, you must provide proof that your child is up to date with state-mandated immunizations. **Without this verification of immunizations, students may not attend school.** For more information on the immunization requirements, contact the Montgomery County Health Department at 240-777-1520.
- **Medications** may not be administered at school without prior approval and the completion of school forms by you and your child's doctor. This regulation includes prescription and non-prescription medications. If your child will require medication or treatment during the school day, please contact our nurse, Mrs. Cheryl Kemp as soon as possible.

**Safety Patrols** There will be a short patrol meeting in the gym just before our Open House at 1:30 p.m. on Friday, August 28. All patrols are encouraged to attend. Whether or not you are able to attend the meeting, all patrols are expected to be at their posts on

time on the first day of school. If you have any questions about these assignments, contact Ms. Ward or Mrs. Wyatt, our patrol co-sponsors.

**Enrollment and Staffing** As of this writing, our enrollment is a bit below projections at approximately 340 students. We continue to enroll students on a fairly regular basis, so I anticipate that this number will increase. As always, I will monitor class size continually and request additional staffing as warranted. Last spring I shared the names of those staff members who were leaving our school due to the boundary change and lower enrollment. Over the summer, we welcomed a new building service worker, Mr. Howard Foreman. A complete staff roster is attached.

As these tight budget times continue, we appreciate the funding and support the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has received from the County Council. We recognize that it is imperative to use our resources in the most efficient and effective manner. MCPS staffing allocations are based on projected enrollment. We certainly hope that at the beginning of the school year our actual enrollment matches the projected enrollment. Unfortunately, as a result of this current fiscal situation, it may become necessary for staffing changes to occur in some schools if enrollment comes in below projection and doesn't justify the staffing that was allocated. If there is a need to make an adjustment in staffing based on actual enrollment, I will do my best to minimize the impact of these necessary adjustments. I will keep you informed and alert you of any changes that may occur at our school.

We are still seeking a few excellent lunch hour aides and substitutes. The people filling these important positions must have a love of and respect for children, an understanding of developmental needs and group dynamics, and a healthy tolerance for controlled chaos. If you are willing to serve your school in this way while earning a little money, please contact our assistant principal, Mr. Vernon Jones.

I am excited about the beginning of a new school year and a new chapter in the history of Cedar Grove, and I'm glad that you will be a part of it. I hope to see you at our Open house on August 28th and throughout the year as we honor tradition and embrace innovation to provide the best possible experience and education for our children.

Sincerely,



Lee F. Derby  
Principal

**Attachments:**

- Bus Information
- MCPS Calendar
- Grade Level Supply Lists
- Staff Roster
- PTA Information
- School Meals SNAP Information