



School Talk

WEEKLY UPDATE!

August 31, 2023

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We had a wonderful week! It was so nice seeing all the students back in the building! It was so nice seeing parents as well! [As we move into the second week of school, we are asking parents to leave their children with our staff at drop off so they can walk to class on their own.](#) As you've seen, we have lots of staff in all the hallways to help guide our learners to their rooms. They will be completely safe and never lost as everyone is here to help them gain confidence to navigate their mornings themselves. The exception applies to our new PreK-3 students starting over the next two weeks - you may walk your children to class on their first day!

The bus is late! Operations and routing team members are assessing route times and realigning to better meet daily traffic and specific school site demands as we transition to new start/end times. They appreciate your patience as they make the appropriate changes to get your children to school on time. Children who arrive at school after 9AM due to a late bus are **NOT** marked as unexcused tardy. All children who arrive on a late bus in the morning are allowed to get breakfast.

Please make sure your children come to school in **appropriate footwear** or bring “recess shoes” on their playground days. The climbing apparatus requires a good foot grip, and children wearing crocs, slides, and non-athletic sandals run the risk of injury when trying to play on those.

[Back-to-School Night is September 6](#)

Parents are invited to come to MPSA for **Back-to-School Night** on **Wednesday, September 6** from **6PM to 7:30PM**. This is a chance for you to hear all about the plans for the classroom from your child's

teacher, ask questions about lessons/curriculum, and get a more in-depth overview of what to expect this year than you did at Open House. There will be 3 sessions beginning at 6, 6:30 and 7 so those of you with multiple children can meet all your children's teachers.

Back-to-School Night is for parents only, so we do ask that your children stay home. However, if not having childcare would keep you from coming, we understand bringing your child along. If that's the case, we politely ask that you bring something quiet for them to do (or provide earphones if you are allowing them to bring a device for distraction).

Introducing New MPSA Staff

We are happy to share that we've had several new and returning staff join our MPSA family this school year!

Ms. Kathleen Boodoo, Special Education Teacher



Ms. Boodoo has taught for more than 20 years. She holds a bachelor's degree in special education from Georgia College and State University, and a master's from Walden University in reading and literacy. She loves poetry and children's literature, and practically everything Maya Angelou has written. In her downtime she enjoys hanging out with her husband, Michael, and her two children, Christian and Kayla. Georgia is always on her mind because her parents, sisters and brothers are there.

Ms. Julie Carson, Lower Elementary Teacher



We are thrilled to have found a staff member here at MPSA who is excited to step into the classroom position! **Ms. Carson** will be stepping in for Ms. Habuki. She's been with APS for four years, and a part of the MPSA community for two years as a Special Education teacher. She knows our families and school community well, and is a strong proponent of the Montessori method. Her daughter also attends MPSA and is currently in Upper Elementary. She has a bachelor's degree in English and a master's degree in teaching from University of Virginia. She embarked on her Montessori training last year and is eager to put it into practice.

Dr. Heba Elsherbeeney, Upper Elementary Montessori Teacher



Dr. Elsherbeeney received her Montessori training at The Center for Contemporary Montessori Programs at St. Catherine University. She graduated from The School of Architecture/Faculty of Engineering at Cairo University. She has a master's degree in Archaeology from The Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium. She has a degree in Music from The Institute of Arabic Music, Egypt. She earned a master's degree in education from St. Catherine University in Minnesota, and a PhD in International Education and Educational Psychology from George Mason University in Virginia. Heba is very excited about joining the Montessori Public School of Arlington and is looking forward to getting to know you and working with your children.

Ms. Michele Halberda, Occupational Therapist (OT)



Ms. Halberda has been a school-based OT for the past 15 years. She has extensive training in sensorimotor treatments, executive function and emotional regulation. She's a Handwriting Without Tears Level 1 Certified Handwriting Specialist. Ms. Halberda holds a Master of Occupational Therapy from the University of Pittsburgh and a Bachelor of Science in Human

Development from Virginia Tech. She loves to work with students to maximize independence, regulation, and social skills.

Dr. Tequila Howard, Primary Montessori Teacher



Returning to our school is **Dr. Howard**. She brings to MPSA her teaching experiences in the field of Early Childhood Montessori education for the past 25 years, both in the United States and abroad in Istanbul, Turkey. She holds a PreK through 3rd grade teaching certification, and a Montessori 3-6 Early Years certification from the American Montessori Society. In her spare time, she loves swimming with the dolphins, working with the hearing impaired, and volunteering at the local zoo to help train chimpanzees. She is thrilled to have this opportunity to work with your children at MPSA.

Mr. Kenneth Mifflin, OT Assistant



Mr. Mifflin is a certified occupational therapy assistant. This year marks the beginning of his 27th year with APS and he has worked in almost every elementary school within the district. Originally from Connecticut, Mr. Mifflin studied occupational therapy during his years in the Army and he graduated from the University of Connecticut. Mr. Mifflin spends his free time playing musical instruments. He takes lessons on the conga (an Afro-Cuban instrument) and West African djembe and is a member of the Akoma Drummers Ensemble.

Ms. Angela Morgan, Reading Specialist



Ms. Morgan has been teaching for thirty years and has taught Montessori at a variety of different levels and settings. She has held the roles of Teacher Trainer, Montessori Consultant, Orton-Gillingham tutor, Fundraising Chairperson and served on the Board of Directors at a small non-profit school. She holds an undergraduate degree in psychology from Randolph-Macon College, Montessori certifications at the Primary and Elementary levels, an Orton-Gillingham Comprehensive certification, a master's degree in early childhood education from Trinity College, and a Reading Specialist certification from George Mason University. Ms. Morgan has two college-age sons, Connor and Dylan. She and her husband spend their free time trying new recipes, walking their dogs Ovi and Jake, attending car shows, taking weekend trips to Williamsburg, and cheering on the Washington Capitals.

Matthew Rinker, Band Instructor



This year **Mr. Rinker's** 30th year in APS. During that time, he has taught at all levels, from PreK thru 12th grade. For more than half of that time he was the band director at Gunston Middle School. This year he is excited to be teaching fully in elementary schools, returning to Fleet and Long Branch and adding MPSA to his roster. Mr. Rinker lives in Arlington, is married, and has two children who are Wakefield HS graduates. Outside of working as a music teacher, he is also a professional musician who has been performing around this area for more than 35 years at venues like Blues Alley, Keystone Korner, the

Kenedy Center, Constitution Hall and others. He currently performs with two musical groups in the area, Sickman a contemporary Jazz/Fusion group and Azil Rain a Pop/Jazz duo. In his free time, he enjoys camping, kayaking and hiking. He is looking forward to meeting more wonderful students this year.

We would also like to **welcome** the following staff to MPSA. We didn't get a picture or bio but hope to have one in the future.

Shandana Afridi, Lower Elementary Assistant

Ms. Maria Cake, Clinic Aide

Dr. Frances Colon Garcia, Psychologist

Carmela Del Vecchio, Occupational Therapist

Julia Kahn, Counselor

Nighat Kahn, Upper Elementary Assistant

Rigoberto Pachecho, Custodial Supervisor

We are sad to **say goodbye** to 2 longtime members of our MPSA Family.

Shannon Joseph, Social Worker: Join us with wishing Ms. Joseph well in her new position at The Lab School in Washington, DC. She's been an invaluable resource to staff and many students and their families at Montessori and will be missed.

Guido Mercado, Custodial Supervisor: The staff was very sad to say goodbye to Mr. Mercado, who has been with the Montessori program since our days at Drew Model School. We wished him farewell just before school started as he had decided to retire to his home country of Bolivia.

ParentSquare Self-Paced Training for Parents

Why sign up for ParentSquare? This newsletter is the last communication families will receive on the current platform. Starting September 1, all communications will be sent via **ParentSquare**. If you don't want to miss out on newsletters and messages from MPSA and APS as a whole, sign up now! You can respond to the invitation sent out by APS, by Kia Stevenson-Haynes in the main office, or sign into ParentSquare here. *You must use the e-mail address or cell phone number you provided to us in ParentVue to get access.*

You can access ParentSquare via desktop or download the app here: [Apple iOS](#) [Android](#)

Lost on how to use ParentSquare? This is a self-paced training for parents created by ParentSquare: <https://parentsquare.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/7756802294285-Self-Paced-Online-Training-for-Parents-Guardians>

What's the difference between ParentSquare and ParentVue? Do I Need Both? Yes! [And this handy dandy infographic will explain why!](#) (tl;dr – ParentSquare is for communications; ParentVUE is for all student data and how you will access your child's academic data.)

When to Use MySchoolBucks vs SchoolCashOnline

SchoolCashOnline was introduced this week as an alternative payment resource. You would use SchoolCashOnline to pay school fees, pay for events, pay for field trips or pay for other school related items (such as school merchandise or make donations). Read more here:

<https://arlingotnva.schoolcashonline.com/>

Need to add money to your child's lunch account? Or pay for Montessori tuition or Extended Day? You need to use **MySchoolBucks**.

You can still pay for items with check/money order or with cash (exact change only as we do not have a way to make change) if you prefer.

4th/5th Grade – Sign Up for MPSA Music Programs

For 4th and 5th grade students ONLY

If your child is interested in expanding their musical knowledge, now is the time to sign up for next year's music programs! Music provides an outlet for creativity and expression, boost academic performance, teach valuable life skills, and is a source of joy and community building. These are the music programs we offer here at MPSA:

- **Band:** Woodwind, brass and percussion instruments
- **Orchestra:** Strings (violins, violas, cellos, and upright double basses)
- **Choir:** Vocal music

Students may choose choir and/or **ONE** of either band or orchestra.

If your child is a rising 4th grader or 5th grader - [please click here](#) to sign up! [Haga clic aquí](#) para el formulario de inscripción en español.

Gunston Students Volunteering at MPSA

Gunston students are always welcome to come to MPSA to **volunteer!** They must sign in at the main office and then go to the classroom they are assisting with. Gunston students who come to MPSA should be here to help. Please ask your visiting Gunston student to e-mail a teacher and make arrangements to volunteer in their class. If they arrive at MPSA without a purpose, they will be assigned one (such as helping with Primary dismissal or shelving books).

Students visiting should have a way to get home from MPSA and should leave the building by the time dismissal ends at 4PM. They cannot volunteer with Extended Day without filling out and submitting a student volunteer form with Ms. Leslie, the Extended Day supervisor.

Upcoming Dates

- Friday, September 1 & Monday, September 4: **NO SCHOOL (Labor Day holiday)**

- Wednesday, September 6: **Back-to-School Night**, 6PM
- Monday, September 25: **NO SCHOOL (Yom Kippur holiday)**

Keep in Touch

- MPSA on APS: <https://montessori.apsva.us/>
- MPSA on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/MPSArlington>
- MPSA Library on Twitter: https://twitter.com/MPSA_Library
- Principal Genove on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CSGenove>
- Arlington Montessori PTA: <http://acmpta.com/>
- Arlington Montessori Action Committee (AMAC): <http://www.arlingtonmontessori.org/>

****SCROLL DOWN FOR THE PTA NEWSLETTER****

ACMPTA WEEKLY NEWSLETTER



What's Inside?

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- **Teacher Wishlists on the ACMPTA Website**
- **Got Caterpillars?**
- **Reflections Art Competition is Underway**
- **Join the PTA or Sponsor a Staff Member**
- **Stay in Touch With the ACMPTA**

ACMPTA Popsicles on the Playground & First PTA Meeting of the Year

Join us on **Friday, September 8th** for **FREE** popsicles* and fun as we celebrate the return to school and have our first PTA general meeting of the year, where we will introduce our proposed budget and share our plans for the upcoming year.

Meet on the “old” playground & basketball court, from **4:15PM to 5:30PM**, with the PTA meeting starting at 5PM.

Children must be accompanied by an adult to attend. Any student who is unattended will be taken to the office and parents called.

**The ice pops we will serve are organic and kosher (gelatin-free)*

Fall School Dance Committee Forming

ACMPTA needs your help to host a Fall school dance! If you are interested in helping to bring this activity to fruition, e-mail our Programs & Event VP, Sonali Singh, at vpprograms@acmpta.com.

Teacher Wishlists are on the ACMPTA Website

Some supplies are not provided by APS because they are not deemed a “necessity”, however, your child’s teacher has some items that they would like have in order to enhance your children’s learning/classroom experience. Their **Amazon wishlists** are posted on the PTA website [here](#).

As always, you are not obligated to purchase anything. These are being shared as a gentle ask.

Got Caterpillars?

It's that time of year where our students like to observe the cycle of the Monarch butterfly, a symbol of the Montessori community, from its caterpillar stage up until its emergence as a beautiful winged insect! Monarch butterfly caterpillars are only found nesting on milkweed. If you have milkweed growing nearby and are willing, please check for caterpillars or chrysalis. E-mail Ms. Suzanne Stork if you find some to find out the next steps.

We will celebrate the end of the cycle as a community on **October 31st** when the Monarchs migrate to Mexico.

Reflections Art Competition is Underway

The **2023-2024** theme for the PTA Reflections Contest has been announced. It is **"I am Hopeful Because..."**

Reflections is a national competition organized annually by the National PTA to encourage arts in education. This competition is open to kids in grades Pre-K through 12 and entries are encouraged from all children across six different categories:

- *Dance Choreography*
- *Film*
- *Literature*
- *Music*
- *Photography*
- *Visual Arts*
- *Special Artist (Category for our students with special needs that is hosted by the Arlington Special Education PTA (SEPTA). Their works will be submitted with the Arlington Special Education PTA (SEPTA).*

More information on how to enter will come when we return to school, however, we encourage your young artists to begin working on their entries now! The ACMPTA **deadline** for all works to be submitted for our students at MPSA will be **Wednesday, October 18, 2023**, by the end of the school day.

Read more about the Reflections Contest on the National PTA website [here](#).

For questions specific to the ACMPTA's participation, please e-mail reflections@acmpta.com.

Join the PTA or Sponsor a Staff Member

Membership is **\$12** per person, or **\$20** for 2 people. Cash and check will be accepted or sign up through our [online portal on Membership Hub](#). Signing up to be a member is also the easiest fundraising effort you could make as a portion of the dues goes into our general fund. Already have a membership? Consider sponsoring a staff member. We require staff to be a paid PTA member in order to receive a PTA grant. Help them out by purchasing them a membership!

Stay in Touch With the ACMPTA

- Our Website: <https://www.acmpta.com/>
- Our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ACMPTA/>
- Our Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/MPSAFamilies/>
- Our Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ArCoMontessori>
- Sign up for our Chat listserv: <https://groups.io/g/ACMPTA>