

School Talk

WEEKLY UPDATE!

August 29, 2025

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We are still collecting supplies for our specials teachers and related services providers (e.g. special education teachers and reading & math coaches). Donations of tissues, disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer. Also pencils, dry erase markers, index cards & reams of card stock are greatly appreciated. Items can be dropped off by your child to Ms. Shakespeare's room or Kia in the main office or bring them with you at Back to School Night on September 11th!

New Faces in Familiar Places – Welcome to New Staff!

Our Montessori family has gained some new members! We are pleased to introduce our new staff:

Marlene Alvarez Zuniga, Bilingual Family Liaison



Welcome to Marlene! She was born in Santiago, Chile, and graduated from the University of La Serena. For 14 years she served the Arlington community through a non-profit organization, always guided by her passion for service. Three years ago, she joined Arlington Public Schools as a Bilingual Family Specialist, supporting families, connecting them with community resources, and building strong home-school communication. She enjoys her placement as a liaison because it's a wonderful opportunity to learn, grow, and build strong connections with families and students. She truly believes that communication and information break down barriers which can help children be happier and more successful in their educational journey.

Rodney Berthold, UEM Teacher



Mr. Rodney Berthold has been teaching elementary, middle school, and high school students for almost three decades. In addition to acquiring his Masters in Secondary Education at Xavier University, Rodney holds American Montessori Society certifications in Elementary I, Elementary II, Secondary I, and Secondary II. He has worked as an instructor in Elementary Geometry at the Institute for Advanced Montessori Studies. He has served on several AMS accreditation onsite visitation teams. Rodney has presented sessions at numerous AMS conferences. Rodney founded Berthold Academy for the Gifted and Talented in 2015. Additionally, Rodney is the father of 2 daughters who began in Montessori education at the age of 18 months. He has also worked with two of our current UEM teachers, Ms. Gizela Austin and Dr. Heba Elsherbeeney, the latter whose sons he taught. Rodney is looking forward to joining the Montessori Public School of Arlington team!

Bee Burns, Occupational Therapist

Dr. Bee Burns, whom children affectionately call “Dr. Bee” joins us this year as our new occupational therapist. She’s an [APS All-Star](#), nominated by her previous school and was acknowledged by Dr. Duran this past June. We welcome her to MPSA!

Darryl Buxton, Student Support Coordinator

We welcome Darryl Buxton as our special education coordinator! Darryl is here to act as the link between students and the resources they need to succeed academically, socially, and mentally by providing guidance, making referrals, and coordinating services to address individual needs.

Alex Dawson, Social Worker



Hello MPSA students and families! My name is Ms. Alex, and I am so excited to be your school social worker this year. I am originally from rural Illinois, and I spent the last two years working in Chicago Public Schools while completing my Masters program. As a social worker, it is my job to lend assistance and problem solve with teachers and families to ensure students have every possible opportunity to be successful at school. I cannot wait to get started on this work with you all! Outside of school I spend my time baking, hanging out with my dog, and exploring my new state.

Kacee Grogan, School Counselor



Hello MPSA families! I was born in Cincinnati, Ohio but I have lived near Arlington since I began my B.A. at Marymount University in Psychology. I played basketball all 4 years of undergrad, and then

to received my M.A. from Marymount in school counseling. I enjoy walking the trails around Arlington with my 3-year-old black lab, Bear. I have been a counselor at Drew for 15 years where I supported both the traditional program and Montessori until it was relocated in 2019. I am excited to re-join the Montessori community!

Tiffany Hanson, LEM Teacher



We are thrilled to introduce Tiffany to MPSA! She brings a wealth of experience to our community, with Bachelors in Elementary Education, a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction and a strong background as a Lead Educator in mixed-age Montessori classrooms. She's held leadership roles as School Leader at private Montessori schools, where she focused on fostering strong family relationships and ensuring high-quality educational experiences. She deeply believes in the Montessori philosophy, not just as an educator, but as a parent herself, with two Montessori children. This personal connection underscores her commitment to nurturing independent, curious, and thriving learners.

Emily Mulligan, Psychologist



Emily Mulligan is excited to join MPSA as the school psychologist this year. She has been with APS for three years and previously worked at Randolph Elementary. In her role, she supports the learning and social-emotional well-being of students through individual and small group

counseling, consultation, evaluations, and behavioral supports. She loves getting the chance to discover and support the strengths of each student! She completed her graduate training in school psychology at George Mason and did her undergraduate studies at Bates College in Maine. Ms. Mulligan lives in Alexandria with her husband and 2-year-old son.

Renee Shaw, Instructional Technology Coach (ITC)



We are welcoming BACK Renee Shaw as our school's ITC! Mom of two kids and two dogs, she is an installation artist, sound healer, Afro-Brazilian drummer, and educator specializing in film and digital communication arts. Her academic background includes a master's in art education and an MFA in Film and Digital Imaging. When she's not teaching at MPSA, you can find her traveling with the all-female drumming group Batalá, biking or hiking with her children, or honing her skills in a Master's boxing program where Renee, a Muay Thai kru, loves teaching women's self-defense.

Notes from Green Street Planting with MPSA

On August 26, the first day of school, about 24 students in grades 1–3 from Ms. Scrafford's class at the Public Montessori School of Arlington (MPSA) planted three large outdoor planters at the front of the school. The project was made possible by generous donations of flowers, soil, and fertilizer from Green Street Gardens in Alexandria.



The children loved getting their hands in the dirt, and for many, it was their first planting experience! They planted annual flowers that attract butterflies, moths, and other pollinators—and were thrilled to see moths already visiting the new plants as they worked. The timing was perfect, since MPSA

students are also raising Monarch caterpillars (the school mascot), which will benefit from the flowers and gain strength for their upcoming epic migration south.



Highlights from the day included:

- Students' excitement at discovering that the sweet potato vines had actually grown sweet potatoes. The class talked about returning in the fall to harvest them and even try making sweet potato fries together.
- One child's discovery of a slug, which drew an eager crowd. After observing the slug's slime trail and learning the slug would have plenty to eat, the student carefully placed it back in the planter and promised to check on it again.
- Several parents shared that the planting was the highlight of their child's first day of school.

A heartfelt thank-you to Green Street Gardens and Ewan for helping make the students' first day extra special!



Parking Reminder

A reminder that the parking lot is for APS staff and Columbia Pike library patrons only. There are a few 2-hour parking spots under the tree line near Highland Street, but you should plan to find street parking if you come to MPSA during school hours.

We are trying to be good neighbors so please be mindful to not block driveways or trash cans on trash day, and park considerately.

Art Department Asks

Ms. Barbour, Art Teacher, is requesting a volunteer to help maintain the studio. Duties include restocking materials, managing donated materials and bringing order to chaos. An hour a week would be really helpful. Please email her if interested. E-mail her at heather.barbour@apsva.us if available.

We are also accepting donations of small boxes (shoebox size and smaller including food boxes) and collage materials (decorative papers, stickers, fabric scraps, ribbons, buttons etc.). Items can be dropped off to Ms. Barbour's room 175 or the main office.

Save the Date: Back to School Night

Back to School Night is a time for parents and caregivers to meet teachers, learn about the school environment, and understand classroom expectations and the academic year's goals. It serves as a vital opportunity for our teachers to communicate essential information, such as the curriculum, homework policies, and safety procedures. **MPSA's Back-to-School Night will be Thursday, September 11.** There will be three 30-minute sessions at 6PM, 6:30PM and 7PM. Please be on time as we will be sticking to the schedule and beginning each session on time. Be aware that there may not be enough parking spaces in the lot, so please account for the possibility of having to find street parking.

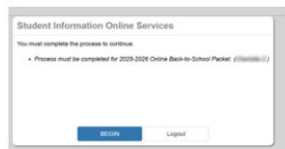
Important: This is an opportunity for parents so we are asking that you **do not bring** your children. There will be crucial information passed along and children tend to get restless and inadvertently cause distractions to others. If for some reason you cannot leave your child home, please consider bringing an activity that they can do quietly during the meeting. If they are bringing a device to occupy them, please bring headphones for them as well.

Complete the Online Back-to-School Packet!

The annual **Online Back-to-School Packet is live!** You are required to have this completed to have access to the features of ParentVUE like test scores and report cards. Please make sure you are not selecting "K-12 Online Registration"! This is for new families who do NOT have a child registered in APS. If you accidentally select it and get an error asking you to contact your child's school, you can

go delete the application yourself and fill out the correct form. Instructions in the pic below. Any questions can be answered by the office staff by calling 703-228-8871.

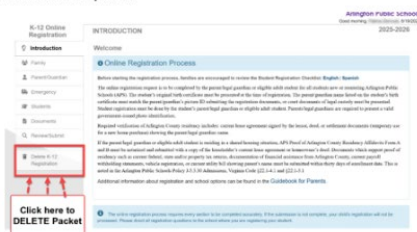
1. When you log into ParentVue you will see the screen below if you have not completed the Online Back to School Packet.



2. On the next screen click the link that says: Online Back-To-School Packet to complete the process. Once your packet has been submitted you will be able to access ParentVue.



NOTE: If parent accidentally selects the wrong packet, they can delete it and go back and select the correct packet



Upcoming Dates

- Friday, August 29 & Monday, September 1: **Labor Day Holiday (NO SCHOOL)**
- Thursday, September 11: **Back-to-School Night (Parents Only)**, 6PM
- Tuesday, September 23: **Rosh Hashanah (NO SCHOOL)**
- Thursday, October 2: **Yom Kippur (NO SCHOOL)**

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
- MPSA Science on Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/MPSA_Science
- 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



August 29, 2025

What's Inside:

- **Teacher Grants Just Opened – Help Your Teachers!**
- **Get Your MPSA Swag Here**
- **PTA Reflections Art Competition is Taking Entries NOW**
- **No Stuff Fundraiser Going Strong**
- **PTA Interest Survey**
- **Snacks for Staff Meetings – Please Sign Up!**
- **Community Interest Share**
- **Keep In Touch**

Teacher Grants Just Opened – Help Your Teachers!

We just opened up the application period for teacher grants! Teachers can make a request for material to enrich your children's education! A requirement to apply is that every applicant must be a PTA member. **We are asking you to consider purchasing a membership for a teacher!** We have about 50 instructors who are eligible to request a grant. [Click here to sign up.](#) List who the membership is for and we will notify them of your gift. In the chance that someone has already purchased a membership for your teacher, *we will pass it along to one of the teachers that is in need of membership.* A sponsored membership is \$15.

If you don't have one, please do sign up, too! This is the easiest fundraiser ever! An individual membership is **\$15**, and a family membership (2 adults) is **\$25**. Also, consider purchasing a membership for your child's teacher so they can apply for a grant!

Get Your MPSA Swag Here!

We have some stock **MPSA swag** for sale! Tee shirts (including PreK sizes), car magnets and now, for a limited time, we are taking orders for our lush pullover hoodie! **Sizes Youth XS to Adult 4X!**

Order swag here!

Hoodie sales will continue until October 3rd and then the order will be place. We do have some hoodies in stock so you may get yours earlier.

PTA Reflections Art Competition is Taking Entries Now



The annual **PTA Reflections Art Competition** is now open! This year's theme is **"I Belong!"**. Information about the different categories can be found [here](#). There you will also find video tutorials by local artists on how to create your best art via mixed media, photography, art (clay), movie making and more!

Deadline to turn in entries is **Monday, November 3rd**. Application form is forthcoming! Any questions? E-mail reflections@acmpta.com.

We look forward to seeing the art you create!

No Stuff Fundraiser Going Strong!



Feeling generous? We have opened our **NO STUFF Fundraiser!** The PTA promises to **NOT** ask your children to sell a thing if we can make our fundraising goal of **\$5000** from this fundraiser! We are asking each family to consider a donation of **\$75** this year – but we will be grateful for whatever amount you decide to donate! We are a 501c3, so your donation is **tax deductible!** [Click here!](#)

PTA Interest Survey

[Please fill out this interest survey](#) and see if there is a role for you in our PTA! Own or work for a business that would like to donate charitable funds, goods or services? [Fill it out, too!](#)

Snacks for Staff Meetings – Please Sign Up!

MPSA instructional staff must meet at least once a month for after schoolwork & collaboration meetings. The ACMPTA would like to revive the tradition where our families would provide snacks for the teachers to have during these meetings. We are looking for at least 4 families to donate snacks to the cause. *Examples of snacks: Granola bars, fruit snacks, nuts, cheese & crackers, cookies, etc. We will also be asking for fresh fruit/vegetables as well.*

Snacks can be dropped off as early as the day before to the Kia in the main office. The PTA will provide paper products.

Sign up here!

Keep In Touch

- PTA Website: <https://www.acmpta.com/>
- PTA Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ACMPTA>
- Private PTA Forum on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1614926128674543>
- PTA Twitter: <https://x.com/ArlCoMontessori>
- PTA Listserv: ACMPTA+subscribe@groups.io
- Montessori Caregivers Group (Parent-lead Private Forum):
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1419402838207257>