



August 18, 2023

Dear Parents and Families of Riverside School,

On behalf of the faculty and support staff of Riverside School, I want to welcome you and your family to the 2023-2024 school year! As a parent of two sons (both currently in high school), who many years ago were elementary school students, I understand the excitement the whole family feels upon starting a new school year.

This is a special year indeed, as we celebrate the 90th anniversary of our school! Opening in the fall of 1933, Riverside School has provided a tradition of excellence for nearly a century. More information about the ways we will celebrate our 90th anniversary this school year will be shared soon.

As we celebrate our 90th year, we look forward to working in partnership with each of you to offer the best possible education and learning environment for your children. As a school this year, we will continue to emphasize our 3 main goals, providing a top quality education for your children, providing an enjoyable and connected classroom and school community for each student, and providing a safe and engaging environment for all at the school.

Our new assistant principal, Mr. Eugene Matejek, and I are pleased to welcome all of the students on our first day of school, Friday, September 1. We have spent many days this summer preparing for their return and we are eagerly awaiting their arrival back in the building. We pledge to work together with our families and staff to provide a successful and rigorous learning experience for all of our students.

Please take some time to read the information in this letter prior to the beginning of the school year, as well as review all of the key documents posted to the Riverside [Back to School Page \(BtS\)](#).

The first day of school is Friday, September 1. It is a full day. Arrival is between 8:30-8:45 and the day officially starts at 8:45. (Kindergarten arrival (for the first day only) will be at 9:30 am at the Kindergarten entrance on the side of the school near Hendrie Ave for their own special welcoming ceremony (see separate Kindergarten letter for more details).

**This year we will hold a “Ring in the New School Year” ceremony** outside the school (weather permitting) as a welcome for all of our students in grades 1-5 and any family members who may be joining us for the start of school. Students and family members are welcome to join us along the front of the school (along the sidewalk areas and in the drop

off lane as needed (which will be blocked off from any car traffic that morning to accommodate families walking to the ceremony (or walking from their cars parked in the neighborhood, if they live too far away to walk/ride bikes)) for the **opening day event 8:30-8:45 am.**

We will have areas set up for each grade level outside (grade 1 near the gym doors, grade 2 by the entry door to the left of the front door, grade 3 by the front door, grade 4 and grade 5 by the entry door to the right of the front door (grade 4 to the left and grade 5 to the right of that door - with signage). Our classroom teachers (along with most of our staff members, as well as Mr. Matejek, our new assistant principal, and I), will join with families outside starting at 8:30 am. Classroom teachers will exit from the doors they will later enter with their students at 8:45 am at the end of the ceremony to start the school day in their classrooms.

Each classroom teacher will have a small flag with their name on it for families to know where their child should go and line up with their teacher. Around 8:42, we will “ring in the new school year” with some brief words of greeting, introducing our new assistant principal, Mr. Matejek, announcing our 90th anniversary as a school, and announcing the start of the new school year. At 8:45, we will let the teachers and students know it is time to start our day and the teachers will take their children into the school to begin their new year of learning.

We ask that parents and family members remain outside and have your child/children enter with their homeroom teacher at their grade level entry doors at 8:45.

The PTA will be providing signs and balloons outside to welcome everyone back for the first day of school as well.

Please note that the PTA is holding a Volunteer Fair in our school café from 9-10:15 am on the first day of school. We hope many will join us for the fair after the opening ceremony has ended and check out the many volunteer opportunities available for parents this school year.

As we do every school day, at the end of the first day of school for the 3:10 (just for Kindergarten – outside the Kindergarten door) and 3:15 (for grades 1-5) dismissal outside, classroom teachers will bring out their students to dismiss them directly to their parents/family members (or for grade 3-5 students who have signed permission, they can walk or ride their bike home).

Daily dismissal at 3:15 pm for grades 1-5 will be as follows: near the gym doors for grade 1 (same as last year), by the door to the left of the front door for grade 3, at the front door for grade 2, and at the door to the right of the front door for grades 4 and 5.

This school year we will return to two entrances in the morning. For any students (and visitors to the school), the front door (with a staff member at the door) will be available for arrivals from 8:30-8:45 am, starting on Tuesday, September 5th. For Kindergarten students (and any children/siblings accompanying a K student) the Kindergarten door on Hendrie

Avenue will also be open (for students only), with a staff member at that door, from 8:30-8:45 daily. That K door will be locked at 8:45 am, so any student arriving after 8:45 am (and any adult visitors) need to ring the doorbell at the school's front door and enter there during the school day.

#### Back to School Documents

Please be sure to review all back to school documents accessed via this link on the [Back to School Page\(BtS\)](#) of the Riverside School website linked here and in the email you are receiving.

We will continue to use School Dismissal Manager (SDM) for dismissal changes so please be on the lookout for an email about setting up your SDM account right before the start of school.

**Class lists will be emailed to parents by today (Friday) by 11 am.**

#### School Calendar

The District's 2022-2023 school calendar is available on the Greenwich Public School's website.

- A classroom visit for all Kindergarteners will be held on Thursday, August 31 at 11 am in the Kindergarten classrooms. Parents and children will meet outside the K door (closest to Hendrie Avenue) and students and their parents will be able to visit their classrooms with their teacher for 30 minutes (please see separate Kindergarten letter for more information).
- An orientation visit/tour for all new students (in grades 1-5) will be held on Thursday, August 31 at 10 am (for new students in grades 1-2) and 10:30 am (for new students in grades 3-5) for 30 minutes. This is a tour just for students (please see separate Newcomer letter for more information).
- Our school PTA will be sponsoring a "Meet and Greet" information table from 10-11:30 am on Thursday, August 31 for Kindergarten families and other families (in grades 1-5) new to the school, near the front door. We encourage the families of all new students as well as new Kindergarten families to stop by.
- The PTA is also sponsoring a "Meet and Greet" for any families at Riverside School so they can stop by to say hello and meet our new assistant principal, Mr. Eugene Matejek, on Thursday, August 31 from 11:30-12 noon at the welcome table out front (please see separate "Meet and Greet" letter for more information).
- Please check the district calendar for all early release days, school holidays and other important dates.
- Please "Save the Date" for our elementary school **Open House** evening (in-person event just for parents/guardians) on **Tuesday, September 19**.

## The Handbook

Reading and returning the "Receipt of Handbook Form" is required.

## Emergency Contact Information

Our home-school notification system known as Blackboard/Parent Link will continue to enable us to inform you of important events and emergencies through automated messaging. Please inform the main office immediately of any changes to your personal contact information.

## School Supplies

The 2023-2024 School Supply List can be found on the Riverside Back to School page. If you ordered your child's school supplies through the PTA, they will be ready for your child in their classroom on the first day of school. For all others, please make sure to send the supplies in with your child on the first day of school.

Finally, I wanted to share with you the updates to sections and to staffing at Riverside so you are aware of the changes.

Based on student enrollment for the new school year, we will have 5 sections of Kindergarten (one more than last year), 4 sections of 1st grade, 3 sections of 2nd grade (one less than last year), 4 sections of 3rd grade, 3 sections of 4th grade (one less than last year), and 4 sections of 5th grade (one more than last year).

Based on these section changes, we have a few classroom teacher moves to announce. Mrs. Ciara Cullen has moved to the Kindergarten team (for the new 5th section), we have hired a new teacher, Ms. Madelyn Hand, joining the 1st grade team, Ms. Kimberly Sturman (formerly in grade 2) is returning to the grade 1 team, Mrs. Mary Anstey is returning to the 5th grade team (from the 4th grade team most recently), Mrs. Kiesha Neitzell is joining the grade 5 team (from the 1st grade team this past school year - she previously taught 5th grade at her former school). In addition, Mrs. Hirshfield will be taking a leave of absence this year and Ms. Cristina Valdovinos will be the Long Term Substitute (LTS) teacher joining the 5th grade team this year. We would like to welcome all of the new teachers and the teachers moving to new grade levels.

This year we will again be running a Native Spanish program for 4th and 5th grade students who are native Spanish speakers (based on the number of students in those grades who qualify for the program). Grade 3 native Spanish speaking students will have differentiated instruction during their Spanish classes.

We welcome Ms. Laura Jeffries as our new .7 (3 1/2 days a week) school psychologist to the school.

As I mentioned in June, we also welcome our new Advanced Learning Placement ELA teacher for grade 3-5, Dr. Benjamin Markus for the new school year.

We welcome Ms. Patricia Morahan to our school as a professional assistant. We also welcome Ms. Mia Dunn as a .1 (one ½ day a week) PE teacher joining our PE team. The rest of the staffing remains the same as the end of last school year with a few TBD to be announced for part time general music and art teachers. You can see the full list of Riverside School Staff members in the Back to School page as well as a separate document.

I hope that you enjoy the remaining week and a half of summer vacation and we look forward to seeing your children soon! Please let me know if I can answer any questions that you may have.

Sincerely,  
Christopher Weiss Riverside School Principal