

# Superintendent's Corner







# Superintendent's Update

As we transition into the beautiful fall season here in Montgomery County, I want to take a moment to reflect on the exciting and successful start to our school year. Our students, teachers, staff, and families have truly embraced this year's challenges and opportunities. I am proud of the remarkable energy, collaboration, and purpose I have seen in our schools.

The first few weeks of the academic year have set the tone for a productive and engaging school year. From classrooms buzzing with activity to inspiring performances on the athletic fields, it's clear that our students are thriving. I've had the opportunity to visit numerous schools, and what I've witnessed has reaffirmed my confidence in the dedication and hard work of our educators. Their commitment to providing the best education for our students is truly commendable. Classrooms are filled with innovative teaching, meaningful discussions, and collaborative learning that is preparing our students for success.

Our fall transition also represents an essential time in the academic calendar. Students are finding their rhythms, teachers are honing in on personalized learning approaches, and extracurricular activities are in full swing. With a renewed focus on academic excellence and student well-being, our schools have already made great strides toward achieving our goals for this year. It's been a pleasure to see students settle into their new routines, building relationships with their teachers and peers that will carry them through the rest of the year.

In addition to our academic focus, I would like to highlight the success of our recent meet-and-greet events with community members. These gatherings provided an invaluable opportunity to connect with parents, families, and local stakeholders. Open dialogue with our community is a cornerstone of our district's success, and I am deeply grateful for the input and feedback we've received. The support and involvement of our community members are integral to our school's success. These conversations have underscored how committed we all are to providing our students with the best possible educational experience. It is through such collaboration that we will continue to grow as a district, ensuring that every student feels supported and every family feels heard.

Fall also marks an exciting time for our sports programs. Watching our student-athletes compete with dedication and teamwork has been a thrill. Whether on the football field, volleyball court, or cross-country course, we can all take pride in the passion and commitment our students display. Their achievements remind us that education extends beyond the classroom and that the lessons learned through teamwork, perseverance, and sportsmanship are invaluable to personal growth. I encourage everyone to attend these games and matches to cheer for our teams and celebrate the sense of unity and school spirit they bring to our community.

In closing, I want to thank everyone—students, teachers, parents, and staff—for making the start of this school year so strong. Our success results from a collective effort, and I look forward to continuing this momentum as we move forward. As the leaves begin to change and the air becomes crisp, I am optimistic about all we will accomplish together this fall and beyond.

Sincerely,

Dr. Bernard F. Bragen, Jr.  
Superintendent

Engage! Encourage! Empower!





# Curriculum & Instruction Update

With the end of the first quarter of the 2024-25 school year just around the corner, I want to take a moment to emphasize the vital role that student involvement and family engagement play in our educational community.

When students participate in school activities—be it sports, clubs, or academic competitions—they not only develop important skills like teamwork and leadership but also forge lasting friendships and connections. These experiences enhance their sense of belonging and motivation, leading to improved academic performance and personal growth. Research shows that students who are actively involved in school activities tend to perform better academically. In fact, studies indicate that students who participate in extracurricular activities are 20% more likely to achieve higher grades and have a greater chance of graduating.

Equally important is the partnership between families and schools. When families are engaged—whether through volunteering, attending events, or communicating with teachers—students feel supported both at home and in the classroom. This collaboration fosters a positive school climate and creates a network of support that benefits everyone. According to the National PTA, students whose families are engaged in their education score 30% higher on standardized tests and have lower dropout rates.

We encourage all families to become actively involved in our school community. Join a parent organization, attend school events, or simply reach out to teachers and staff to learn how you can contribute or support your child's education. Your participation makes a significant difference in your child's education and enriches our entire community.

Together, let's create an environment where every student can thrive, knowing they are supported by both their peers and their families. Thank you for being an integral part of our school community!

Sincerely,

Dr. Barbara M. Wickham  
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction

#WeAreMCPS

# Hispanic Heritage Month

From September 15 to October 15, 2024, we celebrate **Hispanic Heritage Month**—a time to honor the heritage, history, and cultural diversity of Hispanic and Latino Americans. This year's theme, "Pioneers of Change: Shaping the Future Together" (selected by the National Council of Hispanic Employment Program Managers), highlights the trailblazing contributions of Hispanic and Latino leaders across the United States. From rich traditions to groundbreaking innovations, the Hispanic community has been an integral force in shaping our nation.

Hispanic Heritage Month celebrates the histories of those with roots in Spain and 19 countries and territories, including Mexico, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Argentina, and more. As the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Latino puts it, "It's crucial to make sure that the contributions of the Latino community are showcased, and that Latinas and Latinos have a voice." With nearly one in four children in the U.S. identifying as Hispanic/Latino, it's more important than ever to learn and celebrate these vibrant cultures and histories that have shaped our country.

Hispanic and Latino are terms often used interchangeably, but they refer to distinct identities. "Hispanic" connects people to Spain or the Spanish language, while "Latino" focuses on cultural ties to Latin America and the Caribbean. The term "Latino" is also inclusive of a variety of heritages beyond European, including Black, Indigenous, and Asian ancestries.

The contributions of the Hispanic and Latino communities stretch back to the American Revolution, where they played vital roles in shaping our democracy. Today, Latinas and Latinos continue to lead in every sector, from business and activism to art and public service. They are pioneers of change, strengthening our country with their leadership and innovation.

As we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, we invite you to join us in learning more about the vast contributions of Latinas and Latinos throughout history and today. Together, we celebrate their strength and perseverance, their creativity, and their ongoing efforts to shape a brighter future for all of us.

**\*\*Let's celebrate this rich heritage together!\*\***

Sincerely,  
Guylene Wood-Setzer  
Director of Equity and Inclusion

Resources  
National Museum of the American Latino  
National Council of Hispanic Employment Program Managers  
Spokane Public Library  
National Archives

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# Dual Language Academy

MCPS is interested in starting a dual language academy within its elementary schools. This would allow for students, starting in kindergarten, to learn English and Spanish at the same time.

Check out this interview to learn more about how this could work in MCPS!

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## Unified Sports Night

Blacksburg High School celebrated its first “Unified Night” during a home volleyball and football game. These games brought together students from the Unified P.E. class to join with other students in the student section. Unified P.E. brings together students of all abilities promoting inclusion for everyone. Take a look at the two news stories covering the events below:

# Coffee with Dr. Bragen

Throughout September and continuing into October, We've been hosting community conversations across Montgomery County. These drop-in sessions provide an opportunity for parents and community members to connect with the superintendent and also provides Dr. Bragen the opportunity to learn about strengths and concerns across the district.



## October is...

**National Principals Month:** We're thankful for all of our hardworking principals. Our principals play a critical role in making sure our children can learn every day. Thank you for all that you do!

**National Bullying Prevention Month:** This National Bully Prevention Month it's important to remember the importance of being kind and inclusion. Bullying has no place in our schools and we strive to make MCPS an inclusive school division where everyone feels welcome.

**Learning Disability Awareness Month:** Everyone learns in different ways and we want to make sure we are able to help every student succeed. This October we recognize all of our students who face learning disabilities.

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# SMS Attendance

Shawsville Middle School is encouraging daily attendance through class competitions and creating a school-wide currency. Take a look at how some friendly competition is reducing chronic absenteeism.

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## In Memorium

MCPS is saddened by the passing of a beloved member of the EMHS community, Mrs. Holly King. Mrs. King was known for her kindness and passion for education. MCPS will miss Mrs. King and will work to honor the legacy she leaves behind.

