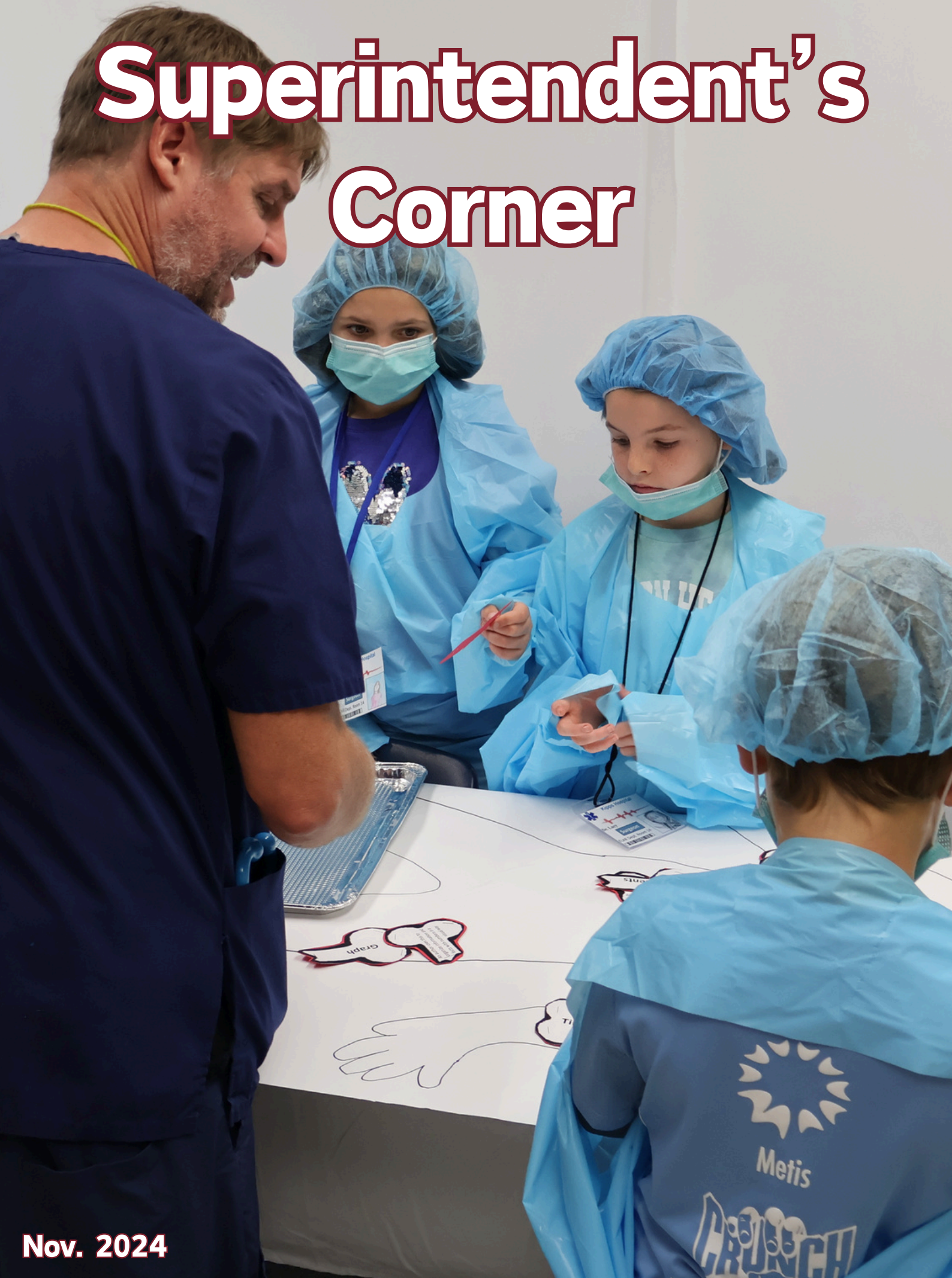


Superintendent's Corner



Nov. 2024



Superintendent's Update

As the days grow shorter and the evenings colder, we know the Thanksgiving season is rapidly approaching. This is a time of year when we reflect on the things we are grateful for. With this in mind, I want to express my sincere gratitude for your support and partnership in educating the youth of Montgomery County.

Your commitment and support of the Montgomery County Public Schools and your child's education are instrumental in helping the division achieve its mission of providing all our children with the foundational skills requisite for future success. I continue to be humbled to have the privilege of leading such a fine institution with dedicated staff who regularly inspire and enrich our classroom, enabling all children to succeed.

As we enter the middle of our second grading period, I am incredibly proud of our students' growth and accomplishments in the classroom and beyond. During this Thanksgiving season, when we gather with family and friends, I hope you can celebrate these achievements with your children and reflect on what we have accomplished so far this school year, knowing the best is yet to come.

On behalf of the MCPS School Board and Staff, I wish you a peaceful and joyful Thanksgiving. May this holiday season be filled with warmth, love, and the company of those we cherish.

Sincerely,
Bernard F. Bragen, Jr.

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Virginia Tech Football Visits BMS

Blacksburg Middle School encouraged the Virginia Tech Football team before they team hit the road for a game. We're proud to have partners like Virginia Tech helping encourage our students to be their best.

Fentanyl Awareness

Fentanyl is a dangerous opioid often mixed with other drugs without your knowledge. Even in small doses, fentanyl can be deadly. • Fentanyl is the biggest contributor to overdose deaths in Virginia - most people who died of a drug overdose took a drug containing fentanyl

View the link below to See more information on fentanyl from the VDOE.

<https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/56287/638591415203270000>

#WeAreMCPS



Curriculum & Instruction Update

Reimagining Grading: What Should Grades Communicate to Students and Families?

In today's rapidly changing educational landscape, we are rethinking many aspects of teaching and learning. One area of focus is grading: what should grades communicate to students and families, and how can we ensure they reflect each child's learning journey in the most meaningful way?

Traditionally, grades have served as indicators of academic achievement in specific subjects, helping students and families understand how well they've mastered certain skills. However, as we dive deeper into the purpose and potential of grading, we see that grades can be even more powerful tools. They should not only measure achievement but also provide insight into students' growth, strengths, areas for improvement, and readiness to take on more challenging material.

More than Just Numbers and Letters

For many of us, grades have long been represented by a simple number or letter. But behind each grade is a story about what a student knows and can do, where they may need additional support, and how they've progressed over time. In reviewing our grading practices, we aim to ensure that grades are truly reflective of each student's understanding and not influenced by factors such as behavior, attendance, or extra-credit opportunities unrelated to academic performance.

Grading for Mastery

We are exploring grading methods that emphasize mastery of content, meaning that students' grades will reflect their grasp of essential skills and knowledge rather than compliance or one-time performance on tests. This approach allows us to support students who may initially struggle, giving them opportunities to relearn and demonstrate their understanding when they are ready.

Encouraging a Growth Mindset

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Curriculum & Instruction Update

Our grading system should foster a growth mindset, encouraging students to see learning as a journey rather than a race to perfection. We want our students to understand that mistakes and challenges are valuable parts of growth. With a grading system that values persistence and improvement, students are encouraged to keep trying, ask questions, and take risks—ultimately developing skills that will serve them well beyond the classroom.

Clear Communication with Families

Grades should also provide clear and consistent communication to you, our families. They need to provide an honest, transparent view of your child's academic progress, highlighting not just where they currently stand but how they can continue to grow. We want grades to be straightforward and meaningful, providing specific insights about your child's strengths and areas where they may need additional support.

Next Steps

As we continue to explore grading practices that align with these principles, we will engage with teachers, students, and families to gather input. We believe that your perspective is essential, and we look forward to creating a system that better serves every child in their journey to becoming confident and capable learners.

Thank you for partnering with us in this important work. We look forward to sharing updates as we move forward and to hearing your thoughts along the way.

Sincerely,
Dr. Barbara M. Wickham

Veterans Day Around MCPS

Christiansburg High School hosted its annual Veterans Day Parade in downtown Christiansburg. Thank you to all our service men and women who have sacrificed for our freedom.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fw3eBoeDZh0>

Falling Branch hosts Veterans

FBES hosted military veterans for lunch this Veterans Day. Family members joined their students for lunch and were treated to a special performance by the FBES Music department.



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Celebrating Native American Heritage Month: Honoring Indigenous Cultures and Contributions

November is Native American Heritage Month, a dedicated time to celebrate, recognize, and honor the traditions, languages, and stories of Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and affiliated Island communities. This observance allows us to learn about and highlight the diverse cultures, histories, and contributions of Indigenous peoples to American society.

Honoring a Rich Legacy of Traditions and Stories

Native American Heritage Month serves as an opportunity to celebrate the unique cultural heritage and resilience of Indigenous communities across the nation. From storytelling traditions and dances to vibrant art and music, Indigenous cultures offer a wealth of knowledge and history that enriches all aspects of American life. Recognizing the heritage of Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Island communities brings attention to their contributions and encourages us to honor their past and present achievements.

Engaging Students in Meaningful Learning

Throughout November, our district's schools may participate in activities and lessons to deepen students' understanding of Indigenous heritage. Here's a look at how our school community will celebrate Native American Heritage Month:

- **Classroom Activities:** Teachers may integrate stories, history, and literature that reflect the experiences and contributions of Indigenous peoples, highlighting the diverse identities and backgrounds within Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Island communities.
- **Library Displays and Resources:** Our school libraries may feature books, artwork, and digital resources from Indigenous authors and artists, providing students with windows into the diverse worlds of Indigenous traditions and contemporary issues.



Equity Update

Families as Partners in Learning

We invite families to participate in this celebration and help extend learning beyond the classroom.

Here are some ideas to engage as a family:

Reading Together: Explore books by Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian authors. Family reading time is a great way to discuss new ideas and perspectives.

Community Events: There may be local events, exhibitions, and performances that will honor Native American Heritage Month, creating opportunities for enriching family experiences.

Reflecting Together: Talk to your child about what they're learning in school, and explore ways you can support a deeper understanding of Native cultures and traditions.

Celebrating Indigenous Peoples

Celebrating Native American Heritage Month is an opportunity to recognize and showcase the rich cultural tapestries of Indigenous peoples. By honoring these stories, languages, and customs, we create a stronger, more inclusive community that values equity and diversity. This month is a time for reflection, learning, and appreciation for the Indigenous cultures that contribute to the vibrant fabric of our nation.

Gyulene Wood-Setzer
Director of Equity and Diversity

Resources:

Senate information
National Day Calendar
National Park Service
The Library of Congress
US Department of the Interior Indian Affairs

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SMS Competing for 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.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7v2tZjwmBE>

Kim Rygas Wins Award

Congratulations to Auburn Elementary School Principal Kim Rygas for receiving the Distinguished Alumni Award from the Radford University College of Education and Human Development!



#WeAreMCPS

Petrone Foundation

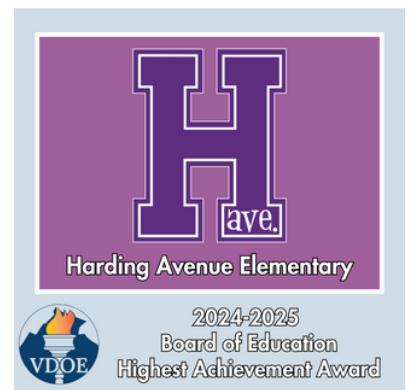
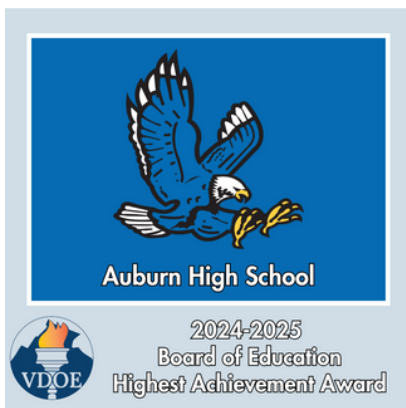
MCPS continues to benefit thanks to a gift from the Petrone Foundation. Golf programs around our high schools are growing.

This year, three high schools launched JV golf programs using funds from the foundation. Thank you for your generous support of MCPS!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_OuFQtN0_8

Highest Achievement Award

Three MCPS schools were awarded the VDOE's Highest Achievement Award for their exceptional work. Congratulations to Auburn High School, Gilbert Linkous Elementary School and Harding Avenue Elementary School!



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