



THE DRIVER'S SEAT

FALL/WINTER 2024 EDITION

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

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Michael Hardesty

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Supervisor

Keith Shorter:

**Out-of-County
Special Needs, &
Liberty, Century &
South Carroll High
Areas**

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Area Supervisors

Kristin Ebert:

**Manchester Valley &
Francis Scott Key High
Areas**

Kim Gold:

**Winters Mill &
Westminster High
Areas**

In-County Special Needs

Chip Weaver

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Anita Stubenrauch

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Driver Instructors

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Scheneeka Weeden

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Sue Hudson

Jill Fulton

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Staff Support

Cindy Washick

While we enjoy unseasonably warm early November temperatures, we know that winter is on our doorstep. There have been advance winter weather forecasts based on a LaNina Pacific Ocean that indicate we may have a relatively mild winter season. While it would be nice if we could know those forecasts will be accurate, we all must prepare for the worst that Mother Nature could possibly send our way. Please make sure to check your automatic chains and FirstNet radios on a regular basis during this winter season so that they will be ready if needed. Your transportation "snow watch" team will be out early in the morning checking road conditions whenever winter weather is predicted or discovered.

This year's snow watch team will remain the same with Kristin Ebert, Kim Gold, and Chip Weaver covering the northwest and northeast quadrants of the county, and Keith Shorter and Mike Hardesty covering southwest and southeast quadrants. A recommendation to the Superintendent for the decision to open on time, delay opening by two hours, or close for the day will always be attempted to be made by 5:00 a.m. However, changing forecasts and weather conditions may cause a delay in our recommendation. A decision to close or delay the opening of schools must be made by no later than 6:00 a.m. Many times, an announcement may be made to delay opening schools with a re-evaluation. Most often this announcement will be made the evening before an anticipated weather event. In this situation, the snow watch team will be on the roads by no later than 5:00 a.m. with a recommendation to either stick to the two -hour delay or to close, made by no later than 7:15 a.m.

Many drivers have asked about the success of the stop arm cameras in catching motorists failing to stop for the stopped school bus while loading and unloading students. Since the inception of the Bus Patrol exterior cameras during the 2020-21 school year, over 29,000 vehicles, an average of 30 - 40 violations/ school day, have been captured going through the red flashing lights of the stopped school bus! Unfortunately, not all of those violations were able to be prosecuted due to drivers not executing proper bus stop procedures. In fact, 37% of the violations have not resulted in a citation. Common reasons for violations being disallowed are: Buses not coming to a complete stop prior to activating the red flashing overhead lights, drivers not giving adequate notice of an approaching bus stop (amber overhead warning lights must be activated at least 100 feet prior to reaching the bus stop), and, buses activating the overhead red warning lights when not authorized to do so. Examples of this would be activating the overhead lights when performing an "off-road" stop (on the shoulder to the right of the solid white line), and, forgetting to activate the override switch after crossing railroad tracks or forgetting to turn off the overhead lights while in motion.

Overall, the stop arm camera program has been a tremendous success in catching motorists who run through the lights of the school bus. Revenue collected from the approved violations fund the FirstNet push-to-talk communication system, Zonar fleet tracking system, interior bus cameras, our bus routing software, and covers the administrative costs of the Sheriff's Office in approving citations for stop arm violators. Thank you for your attention in making sure the proper bus stop procedures are executed so that all valid violations can result in tickets issued to the vehicle owner.





Student Attendance Tracking

Tracking student ridership is a critical part of Special Needs Transportation. Student attendance must be accurately recorded for all AM, Midday, and PM routes. When these attendance sheets are turned in they are then reviewed to ensure that all students requiring Special Needs Transportation services utilize the bus. We can then work in conjunction with schools to identify trends and/or potential concerns. One of the greatest predictors of student success at any level is their attendance. When students show up consistently, their chances of academic and social success are much greater.

Any information shared by parents to Drivers or Assistants regarding changes in attendance, living situations or address changes should be communicated to the Transportation Office. All changes to student information is made in collaboration with the school. The sooner we can get any upcoming or potential changes verified the better.

**If a student has not ridden your bus for five consecutive days, please notify your contractor. At that point they will contact the Transportation Office.*



What Makes a Good School Bus Driver Great?

Being a great school bus driver is about more than just picking up children and driving them to school! A great school bus driver has a sense of pride in their job. They are the biggest factor in students getting to and from school safely and will be proud of that fact. All of the qualities below combine to make up the 5 P's of a great school bus driver. They are all important attributes that give families faith in the ability of the driver to keep their children safe and on course.

Protects from Danger

Driving a school bus is much different than driving a car. A great school bus driver will have mastered the differences and drive their bus as though their own children were in the back. Obeying the rules of the road and knowing how a bus needs to be handled in situations like snowy roads, high traffic times and in sub-par lighting conditions really makes the difference. Nothing is more important than the safe transport of the children in your care. Not only in driving safe, but also things like keeping students safe from possible bullies while on the bus, keeping them seated and facing forward and even ensuring they cross the street safely before or after riding the bus.

People Person

A school bus driver's face is often the first adult face a child sees each day other than his or her parents. It is vitally important that students be welcomed with a smile and pleasant greeting, to bridge the gap between home and school. A cranky bus driver will just start students off on the wrong foot.

Patient

A school bus driver that can balance driving the bus while making sure the students are not acting out takes quite a bit of patience and skill. A driver that gets frustrated easily is going to have trouble maintaining patience with excited students. A school bus driver will spend most of their workday surrounded by children, so it is important that a driver likes being around children. A great bus driver means being able to value a wide variety of personality types.

Poised

When you have a couple dozen students seated behind you and a schedule to keep, things are bound to pop up that might create pressure. Things like bad weather, cranky students, road rage and poor traffic conditions all require calm responses to ensure maximum safety for everyone involved

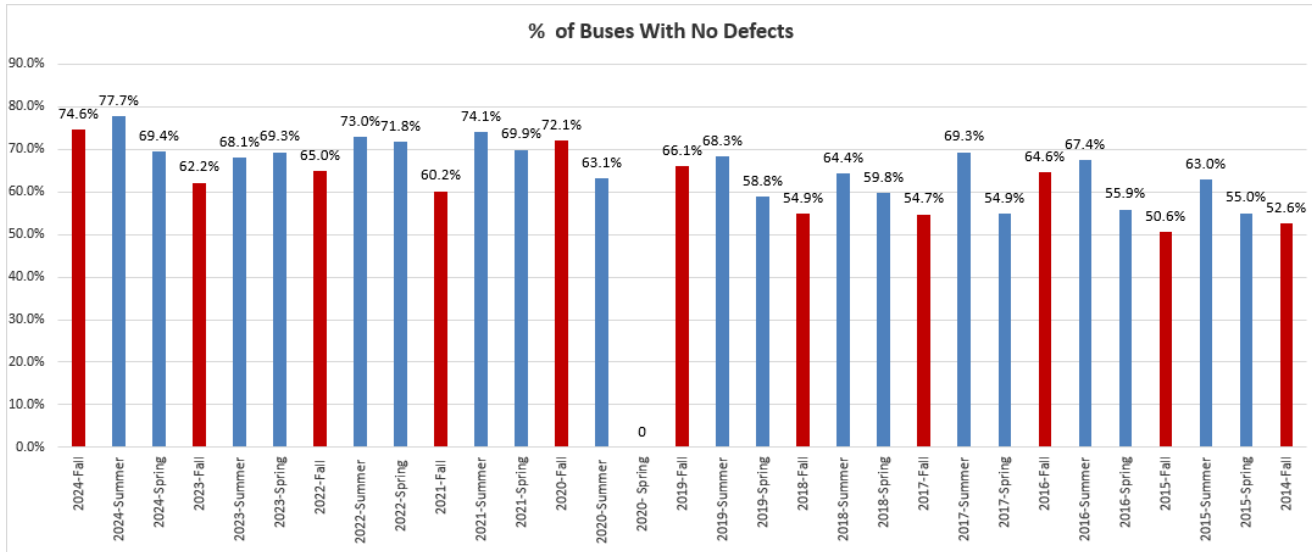
Punctual

It is a given that students have to get to school on time. Not only that, but children wait at their bus stops for their bus to arrive at a certain time. It is important for their school bus driver to make it to each stop on time, and especially important that they are not too early! This all starts with getting to the contractor lot on time, doing a thorough pre-trip inspection, and being punctual.

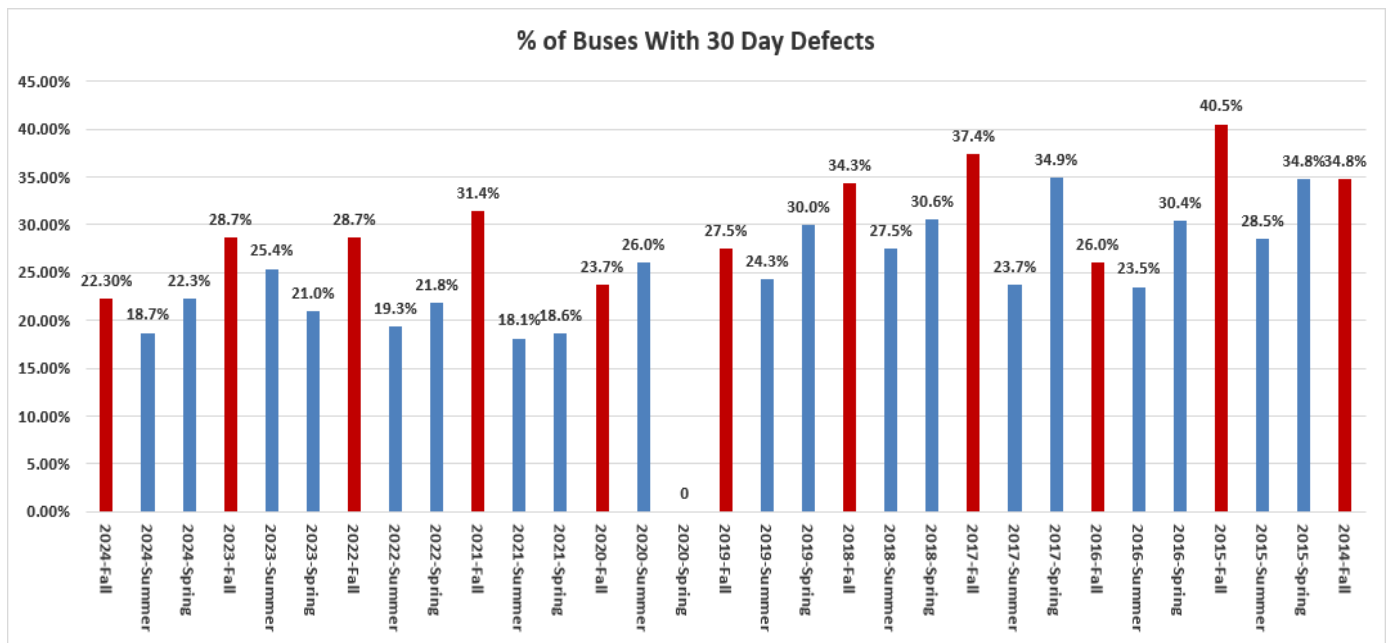


FALL 2024 BUS INSPECTION

The Fall 2024 bus inspection was held on November 12th, 13th, 14th, 19th and 20th. For a mid-November inspection, weather was better than expected. Overall, the inspection results matched the weather, very good, although given our fleet's excellent recent track record not better than expected. Given our excellent recent track record and our reputation with the MVA and throughout the state, the outstanding Fall 2024 inspection results should not be a surprise. As you can see in the chart below, the percentage of buses passing inspection, 74.6%, was the highest ever.



Not surprisingly, based on the percentage of buses passing being historically high, the percent of buses with 30-day defects and redline defects were also historically low, especially for a Fall bus inspection.



The inspection location with the overall best performance was FSK. Granted, there are fewer buses inspected at FSK, but almost 95% of the buses passed inspection with no defects. The results for all days are noted below:

Daily Bus Inspection Results Fall 2024

	Pass		30 Day		Redline	
Inspection Location/Date	# of buses	%	# of buses	%	# of buses	%
CHS- Tuesday, November 12	49	73.1%	14	20.9%	4	6.0%
MVHS- Wednesday, November 13	37	71.2%	15	28.8%	0	0.0%
WMHS- Thursday, November 14	46	69.7%	15	22.7%	5	7.6%
FSK- Tuesday, November 19	35	94.6%	2	5.4%	0	0.0%
WMHS- Wednesday, November 20	44	72.1%	17	27.9%	0	0.0%
Total	211	74.6%	63	22.3%	9	3.2%

The most frequently recurring defects were fluid leaks (coolant, transmission and oil), tires, chains, body paint & condition and strobe light defects. The chart below shows the breakdown of each defect:

Fall 2024 Bus Inspection: Most Frequently Occurring Defects

Type of Defect	Total # Cited	Majors Cited	30 Day Cited
Fluid Leak	14	0	14
Tires, wheels	13	3	10
Chains	12	0	12
Body, Paint Condition	8	0	8
Strobe	4	0	4

As a team, we are proud of the efforts you all have put forth in making sure our buses are clean, well maintained and safe. The work we do as a team to run an efficient, effective and fair bus inspection and the condition of our buses is well noted and often commended by our MVA counterparts in state meetings. Please continue the great work, take pride in our fleet and keep those buses safe. Remind your drivers to do thorough pre and post trip inspections and to report defects to you, the contractors, when they see them. Once defects are noted, ensure they are repaired quickly.

SPRING 2025 BUS INSPECTION SCHEDULE

MARCH 2025

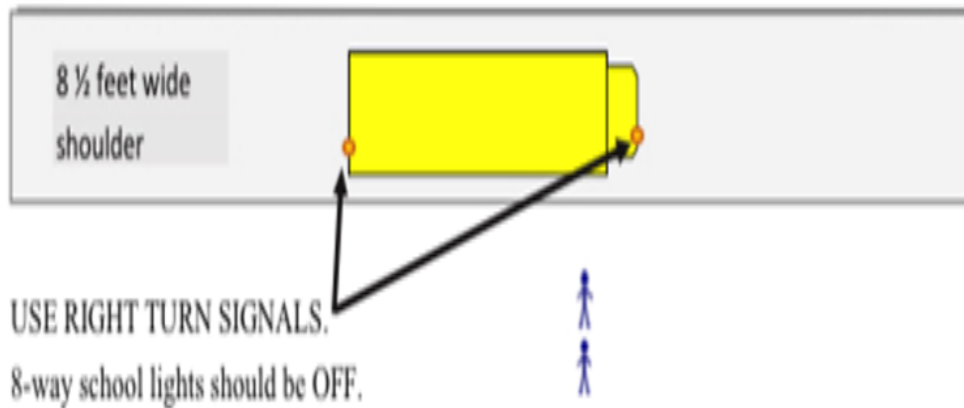
- 18th Spring Bus Inspection (8:45 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.) Francis Scott Key High
- 19th Spring Bus Inspection (8:45 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.) Century High
- 20th Spring Bus Inspection (8:45 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.) Winters Mill High
- 25th Spring Bus Inspection (8:45 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.) Manchester Valley High
- 26th Spring Bus Inspection (8:45 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.) Winters Mill High
- 27th Spring Bus Inspection Inclement Weather Make-up Day (8:45 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.)

REMINDERS: Off-Road Stops

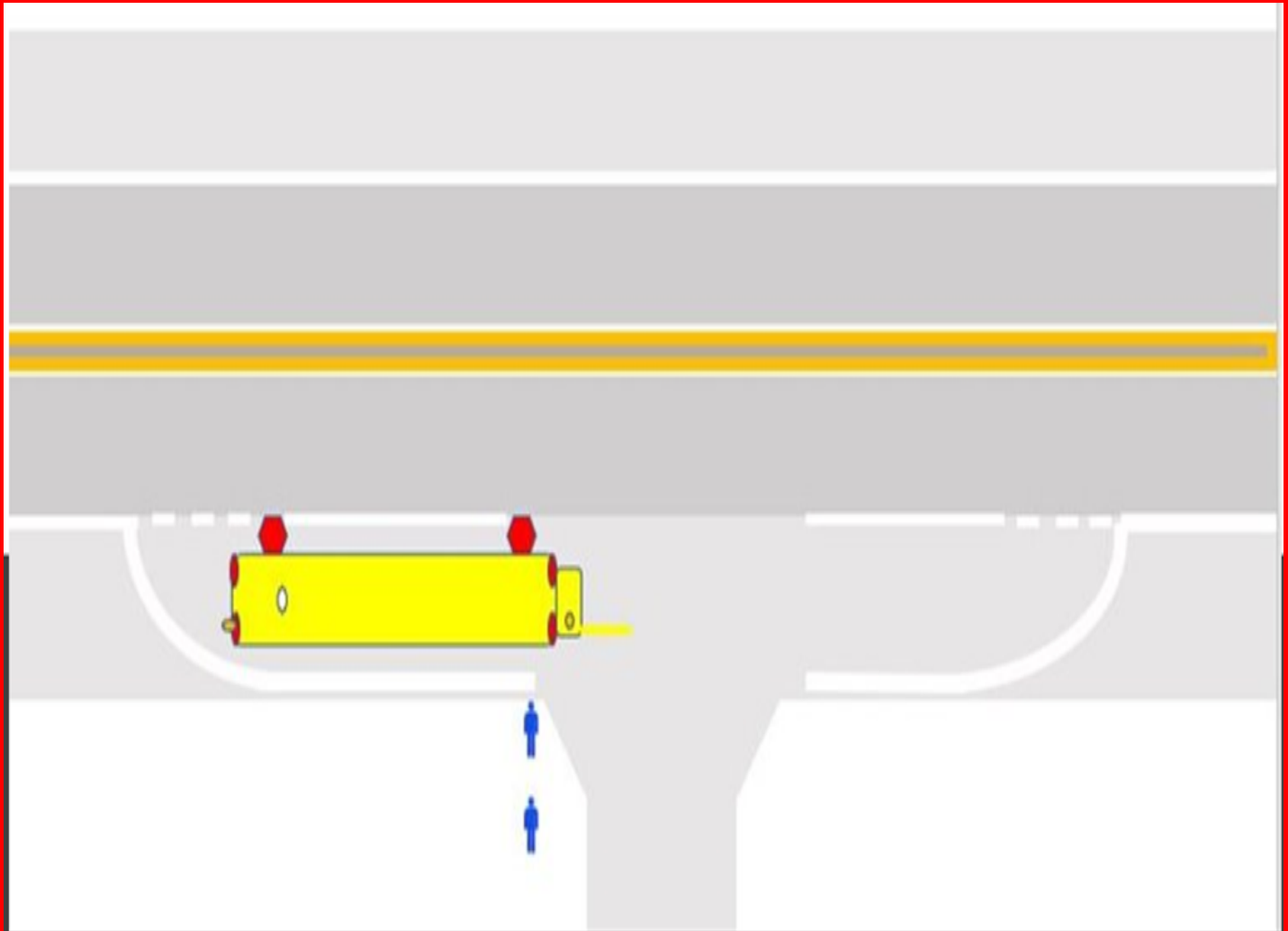
Off road bus stop:

(Designated by transportation supervisor)

- Deactivate 8-light warning system. (Master Switch)
- Use right turn signal.
- Bus stops in loading area on side of road.
- Same-side service only.



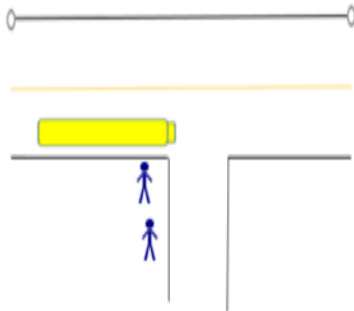
REMINDERS: Acceleration/Deceleration Lane



Acceleration/Deceleration Lane:
Same side service only.

REMINDERS: Turn Arouds—Loading**Turn Arouds: Loading**

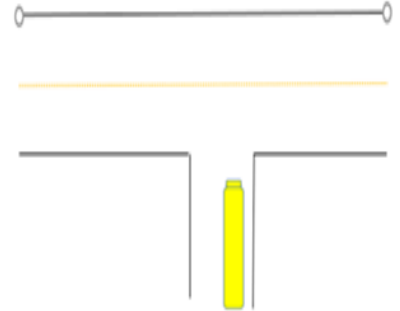
- Uses 8-light warning system for pickup
- Activate hazard lights after pickup.
- Deactivate red flashing lights



- Pull past turn around entrance



- Perform turn around
- Deactivate hazards, continue route.



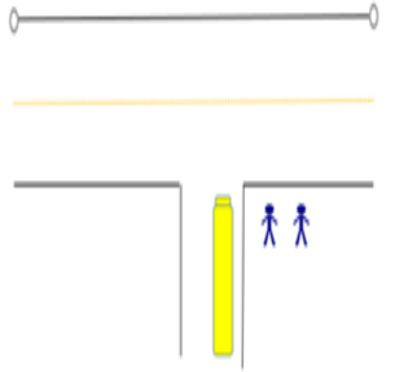
REMINDERS: Turn Arouds—Unloading

Turn Arouds: Unloading

- Activate amber flashers at least 100 feet prior to the stop
- Activate hazard lights
- Pull past turn around



- Back bus into turn around
- Stop the bus, activate red flashing lights by opening door.
- Unload
- Deactivate hazard lights
- Close door/deactivate red flashing lights



- Continue route





REMINDERS:

Move

Over

Law

Image and article credited to: Zero Deaths Maryland Highway Safety Office, 2024

<https://zerodeathsmd.gov/how-you-can-help/move-over/>

Maryland's Move Over Law

It's Maryland Law to move over when approaching **ANY** stopped, standing, or parked vehicle displaying warning signals – including hazard warning lights, road flares, or other caution signals including traffic cones, caution signs, or non-vehicular warning signs. If it is not safe or feasible to move over, motorists must slow to a reasonable and prudent speed that is safe for existing weather, road, and vehicular or pedestrian traffic conditions.

The law is in place to protect law enforcement, emergency responders, and any motorist that may encounter a roadside emergency and must stop near travel lanes.

Consequences

Violating the law is a misdemeanor carrying a \$110 fine and one point on your license. If the violation causes a crash, the fine is \$150 and three points. If there is a death or serious injury, the fine is \$750 and three points.



This the Season to Get Hygge!

For those who may not be familiar with the term, hygge is a Danish concept that describes a feeling of coziness, comfort, and well-being. The word hygge is pronounced "hoo-gah" and originated in old Norwegian, where it meant something like "well-being". Hygge is more about creating an atmosphere than doing a specific thing.

Hygge involves creating a warm atmosphere and enjoying life's simple pleasures with people you care about. You might be wondering; how do I create a hygge environment? It's really quite simple. Try a few of the following:

- ◆ Light candles, wear fuzzy socks, and enjoy a warm drink
- ◆ Spend time with loved ones: Have a meal with friends and family, or go for a walk together
- ◆ Take a break from technology: Unplug from the internet, or create a screen-free room in your home
- ◆ Embrace the simple: Keep things simple, but also say yes to an extra slice of cake
- ◆ Plan an indoor picnic with a loved one (or ones)
- ◆ Take a fall or winter hike while enjoying fresh air, sunshine and the sights and sounds of nature
- ◆ Wrap yourself in a cozy blanket, snuggle by a fireplace and share memories or simply enjoy the crackling fire
- ◆ Start an outdoor fire in your pit and roast marshmallows for s'mores
- ◆ Gather everyone for a game night
- ◆ Use essential oils such as cedarwood, vetiver and myrrh
- ◆ Avoid multi-tasking – give your full attention to one thing (or person) at a time and enjoy the present moment
- ◆ Bring the great outdoors indoor with live plants





CONSENT AND RELEASE

Permission to Photograph, Videotape or Audiotape

Throughout the school year, the Carroll County Public School System frequently covers school activities and may use your child's photograph, video image, or voice for educational, informational, or public relations purposes, with or without identification by name.

If you do not wish to have your child's voice reproduced on tape or to have his/her image appear in such things as a video or a photograph, or on the school or school system website or social media, please notify the school principal in writing. It is assumed that parents and guardians consent to their children being audiotaped, photographed, videotaped, or having their image placed on a school website or social media by the school system unless such notification is received.

There are also occasions when the media cover certain school events (such as when a government leader visits a school). If you do not wish to have your child's name or likeness published by the media, you should address your concerns directly to the school involved so that the media is so advised. Please be advised that the school system has no control over the media when they are covering activities such as sporting events and musical programs that are open to the public.

Use of Student Work on Websites or in Publications

There may be times throughout the year when the Carroll County Public School System wishes to display student work on school websites, social media, or in publications. If you do not wish to have your child's art, poetry, writing, etc. appear on school websites, social media, or in publications, please notify the school principal in writing. It is assumed that parents and guardians consent to their child's work being displayed on school websites, social media, or in publications unless such notification is received.