August 20, 2025

Welcome Back, Royle Families!

As we love to say at Royle—**"Happy New Year!"** It's been another busy and productive summer as we prepare to open our doors for the 2025–2026 school year. Our construction project is also well underway and making great progress, adding to the excitement of a fresh start.

I hope your summer has been restful, fun, and full of great memories. We can't wait to welcome your children back to school soon!

I'd also like to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude to the dedicated Royle staff members who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes all summer. A special thank you to **Jessica Presser** in our main office, **Katie Risk** and **Amanda Kearney**, our amazing Assistant Principals, and our incredible custodial team—**Hector, Reinaldo, and Mike**—for their hard work in getting the building ready. Navigating a construction site is no easy task, and they've handled it with professionalism and care to ensure we're ready for another fantastic year of learning.

This electronic mailing contains important information about the opening of school. Teacher assignments will be available on ASPEN, today, **August 20th at 3:00 PM. Please be sure you have completed your ASPEN updates and sign-off(s) by September 3rd. Attached below is a link to ASPEN on the Darien Public Schools website https://www.darienps.org/parents/aspen-student-information-system**

If you need assistance regarding ASPEN you can contact the helpdesk.

2025-2026 Royle Staff Roster

We are excited to welcome back many of our Royle teachers, as well as welcome some new faces to the Royle family! This year, we will have 3 class sections in grades 1-5, and 4 class sections in Kindergarten. Here is our 2025-2026 Royle teacher roster:

K: Fiona Doonan* (Jaclyn Vroman, Maternity Leave Aug-Nov), Allison Keating, Liz Markham, and Beth Joyce

1: Bess McNamee*, Christina Capasso, Asia Boyd

2: Christie Martin*, Nancy Mason, Casey O'Brien (Jami Tucker, Maternity Leave Aug-Nov)

3: Linda Dragotta*, Devon Tiani, Amanda Orvis

4: Lisa Vetti*, Sara Farina (Kinsley), Kelly McKay

5: Kayla McEwan*, Keith Satter, Jenna Rosen/Emery Tedesco, co-taught 5th grade

**denotes Grade Level Leader*

Staff New (or Returning!) to Royle:

Kelly McKay- Classroom Teacher, 4th grade

Beth Joyce- Classroom Teacher, Kindergarten

Jami Tucker- 2nd grade Maternity Leave/Building Substitute

Jaclyn Vroman- Kindergarten Maternity Leave

Aimee Marine- Special Education Teacher

Nicole Clarke- Building Substitute

Kerri Sloan- Building Substitute

Ayse Wilson- Itinerant Art Teacher

Michelle Furrer- Itinerant Art Teacher

John (JD) Davis- Campus Monitor

Jacqueline Colon- Special Education Para-Educator

Ryan Carroll- Special Education Para-Educator

Thomas Carlucci- Lunch Monitor

SCHEDULES FOR OPENING DAYS

Wednesday, August 27th- First Day of School for grades 1-5
School Hours: 8:25am-2:55pm
9:00 am: Kindergarten Orientation (see alphabet breakdown below)
10:15 am: Kindergarten Orientation (see alphabet breakdown below)

Thursday, August 28th - Full school day for all students grades K-5
School Hours: 8:25am-2:55pm

First Day of School & Parade of Learners

Our Parade of Learners tradition will be put on hold again this year while Royle undergoes its renovations and alterations project. For the safety of our students, staff and families, students will come right into the school building on the first day of school. Families can say "goodbye" to their student(s) at the front door if walking to school, or lower loop for car drop off. Staff will be stationed outside and around the school building to assist students in finding their new classroom. Students will wait outside of their classroom, inside the building, from 8:15-8:25 am with adult supervision in the hallways. This is similar to what our arrival process looks like on days with inclement weather. For the duration of the construction project this year, students will follow this arrival process when they get to school in the morning.

Kindergarten Orientation

Our **Kindergarten students** will have the opportunity to meet their teacher and visit the classroom on August 27th. Kindergarten parents please bring your child to school at the following time:

Wednesday, August 27th:

9:00-9:45 am	Last names that begin with A-K
10:15-11:00 am	Last names that begin with L-Z

Please bring your Kindergarten student to the front entrance of the school.

While Kindergarten students are visiting their classrooms and getting to know their teacher and classmates, Kindergarten families are invited to join me, our assistant principals, school nurse and our PTO, for an introductory meeting and Q&A session in our newly constructed Royle Global Learning Commons.

All Kindergarten students will have their first full day of school on **Thursday, August 28th.**

Linked here is the Elementary 6-day rotation calendar for your convenience!
25-26ElementaryRotationCalendar.pdf

Arrival and Dismissal

Below is information on arrival and dismissal procedures for grades K-5. **No dogs are allowed on campus for arrival or dismissal. Dogs may not be carried onto the campus either**. This is to ensure the safety of all of our students.

Arrival

Students can arrive by bus or by parent drop-off at school beginning at 8:15am. Students in grades 3-5 are also still welcome to walk or bike to school. Bike racks are located at the rear of the Kids' Zone.

Students may arrive at school between 8:15am-8:25am. **Students may not arrive prior to 8:15am as there is no supervision prior to then**. Due to the construction, students will be directed to come right inside the building at 8:15am, and to wait outside of their classrooms. School staff will supervise students waiting outside of their classrooms.

Parent drop-off will continue to be in the lower lot. Please ensure that your child is ready to exit your vehicle when you enter the drop off loop. This ensures an efficient drop off and keeps the line moving! I ask that we continue to work together to make this as efficient as possible, so we please ask that you watch for Royle staff members waving you forward, pull around the loop (past the dumpsters and picnic tables) to where we are waving you to allow for as many cars to enter the loop as possible. Then, have your child exit the vehicle as quickly (and safely) as possible to keep our traffic moving. Please do not stop directly at the door area without pulling up. Please note: **You cannot park in the loop and walk your child to the door**. We will have staff outside ready to assist your child(ren) and help with their belongings. For students that may require additional assistance for the transition, our administrators and school psychologists will be available to assist you!

If you are driving a Kindergartner to school, please use the lower loop and stop at the stairs on your right. A Royle staff member will be there to assist your Kindergartner up the stairs and into the school building. This ensures the safety of our youngest learners getting to where they need to go safely and with adult supervision.

Dismissal

All students in grades K-5 will dismiss at 2:55 pm. Walkers and bikers will be called first to dismiss. Children taking the bus will remain in their classroom until their bus is called.

For parent pick up: If you are a returning Royle family, please use your car visor sign previously given to you. For new families, we will give your child a car visor sign on their first day to bring home to you. You can also contact Jessica Presser (jpresser@darienps.org) in the main office to pick up a visor sign before school starts. Car visor signs should be displayed in the front window of the pick up vehicle when picking up your child(ren) at dismissal.

For parent pick up, you will proceed to the lower lot and pull forward to the Royle staff member waving you on. We will read the visor tags and call into the school to have children sent down for dismissal in order to maintain safety. **On the first days of school, we kindly ask that you have a sign in your passenger window/windshield with your child(ren)'s last name to assist in dismissal prior to visor signs being available.** Please note: **you cannot park in the loop and leave your car to meet your child in the Kid's Zone for pick up. Please stay in your car and as you move up through the loop we will get your child to you.** This is to maintain the safety of all students, families and staff.

For pick up in the lower loop, students must remain in the cafeteria until their car (or family/caregiver via walking) arrives. The students' last name is then called through the walkie talkie, to the supervising staff member in the cafeteria. Your child will then come outside to meet you either in the Kids' Zone if you are walking, or in the car line if your child is a car pick up. *Please do not ask your child to bypass this process as it is unsafe and causes delays in the car line.*

DISMISSAL APP - *Pikmykid*

For safety reasons and to avoid confusion, it is essential that we have accurate information about how your child is going home **each day**. This is particularly important during the first few weeks of school when routines and procedures are still new for everyone!

For the 2025-2026 school year, Darien Public Schools will continue using ***Pikmykid*** (www.pikmykid.com) to track student dismissal information. Each day ***Pikmykid*** will be used to notify classroom teachers how each child in their class is going home that afternoon. This is the app that parents must use for any change to a student's dismissal plans. All parents of elementary-aged children will be asked to create an account prior to August 27th. Directions for doing so are here. This year, all students who are eligible for a bus will be assigned to a bus route and the assigned bus number will be your child's default setting in *Pikmykid**. If your child will be going home a way other than their default setting, **parents are required to log in and enter their child(ren)'s dismissal plans for that day**. Please be sure to make these changes **PRIOR to 2:15 pm each day.**

It is possible to set an ongoing recurring dismissal plan in *Pikmykid* (i.e. if your child will always be a pickup or always walk home). Please click here if you'd like to see a step by step visual on how to create a recurring change.

If you need help with navigating the *Pikmykid* app, please note that *Pikmykid* has 24/7 Parent Support. You may contact them at support@pikmykid.com or directly in the parent app by going to the Account Tab >> Contact support.

Here is a full resource folder that you may find helpful.

Please note that Royle School staff are unable to address inquiries about bus routes, bus drivers, pick up/drop off locations or times, or other transportation concerns. Those questions should be directed to our Transportation Coordinator, Dani Powers at dpowers@darienps.org.

Chain of Communication
Please see the District's communication protocol linked here:
https://www.darienps.org/parents/chain-of-communication

Bus Schedules and Transportation
Bus schedules will be posted on the district website and in the local newspapers, prior to the opening of school. Check the district website for the most updated schedules, linked here Transportation - Darien Public Schools. Kindergarten students will be provided with a bus tag that should be clearly displayed on students' backpacks so that the driver can easily identify Kindergarten riders. **Kindergarten students must be met by an adult at their bus stop, or they will be returned to school for pick up.**

This year every family that is "bus-eligible" will be assigned a bus. **You DO NOT need to opt-in for transportation as you may have done in the past.** Your bus route is determined by the District Transportation Office and is based on your address. Your child may not use a bus route other than the one assigned to your address. Your child is "bus-eligible" if you live more than a half mile from school. Please visit the District's Transportation Website for more information. If you have any questions regarding transportation, please reach out to Dani Powers at dpowers@darienps.org.

Student Illness
We ask that you work with us to carefully monitor children for illness. If you have any questions about your child's health or an illness, please contact our school nurse, Robin Boccanfuso (rboccanfuso@darienps.org). We continue to ask that if your child is not feeling well, you please keep them home to rest. Please see attached the Health Information update from our Director of Nursing, Emily Merritt. Health Information 2025-2026.pdf

I also encourage you to visit the Royle School Nurse website https://roy.darienps.org/about/royle-school-nurse to find answers to any health-related questions you may have.

If you do keep your child home, for any reason, please email our attendance email: royleatt@darienps.org. It is important that the main office has this information as well as the classroom teacher.

Lunch and Snacks

Some classrooms will be designated **NUT FREE** due to student need. If your child's classroom is a "nut-free" classroom, you will be notified by our school nurse and your child's classroom teacher. At this time, students may bring food with nuts to the cafeteria, but we would prefer that our school remain as "nut-free" as possible to provide the safest environment for our students with life threatening nut-based allergies.

Children will go through the lunch line in the cafeteria to buy lunch. Lunch menus are available online so you can see "what's cookin" each week!

For information regarding Free/Reduced Lunch, please contact Dani Powers (dpowers@darienps.org) and see the information below. Please note, you must fill out this form each school year to be considered for Free/Reduced Lunch.

Additionally, Royle will continue to have **non-food celebrations** for all birthdays and holidays. Consistent with our approach to healthy lunches through our district lunch program and healthy habits through our district Physical Education and Health curriculum, in-school celebrations for holidays, birthdays, etc. will not be food-based. Students will not be allowed to bring food to share with their class or peers. Room parents, in conjunction with our Royle PTO, will work with individual teachers and classes on other ways to celebrate children's birthdays and other holidays throughout the year.

Visitors and Volunteers

Visitors and volunteers are welcome at school for pre-arranged meetings or events only, and is at the discretion of the teacher. We will work to balance opening up the school to visitors while maintaining a safe and secure school environment, especially while undergoing construction. Visitors will continue to be welcomed on an essential basis. This helps to maintain continuous, consistent learning across the day for all of our students.

If you are bringing a forgotten belonging or lunch to school for your child, you may leave it with our campus monitor who will bring it to your child. This helps limit the disruption to the learning environment during the day. Please ensure any items brought during the day are labeled with your child's full name and teacher name. Parents may not visit their child for lunch or recess. The school campus (fields, playgrounds, picnic tables, etc.) is closed to all visitors during school hours. The campus, including the playground, may be used outside of school hours and on the weekends.

Due to the ongoing construction project this year, all school meetings and events will be adjusted accordingly. We thank you in advance for your understanding and flexibility!

Meetings

Parent meetings (including PPTs, 504s, and meetings with the nurse) may be held in-person, remotely via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or by telephone. We will work with families to determine the best format for meetings and work together to schedule them as appropriate. A lesson learned in the pandemic was that Zoom meetings were efficient and resulted in increased productivity, and allowed for many working parents to join meetings during the school day without substantial disruption to their work day!

Our teachers have put together welcome letters for their classes and those will be emailed to you this week, along with any updates I get from our Central Services team to help start the new school year!

Also- please save the date(s) for our Parent/ Teacher conferences this year. These are adult only conference days for families to meet with teachers. **This year our elementary Parent/Teacher conferences will be held on October 21st-October 24th, SNOW DATE (let's hope not!), October 28th**. These conference days will be early release days at 12:55 pm for students. More information will be shared as we get closer to October!

Updated District Personal Mobile Device Guidance

Please see the attached letter regarding the District's personal mobile device guidelines.

District Personal Mobile Device Letter.pdf

Construction Updates

Here are a few construction highlights to make you aware of as we enter the new school year:

- The Global Learning Commons (Library Media Center) has been completed
- Our new outdoor courtyard space has been completed
- The new First and Second Grade wings have been completed
- Central Air Conditioning has been installed and is working in specific areas of the building
- There is construction on the interior of the building this year, right-sizing classrooms on the first and second floors
- Portables have been demolished and construction of the new Art and Music wing will be completed next August

We will continue to provide updates regarding the work that is occurring as well as continue to look for ways to embrace the construction as a learning experience for our students.

I am thrilled to welcome you all back to Royle for this new school year. The hallmark of our community is the support and care we have for each other, and our dedication to our students. While change and transitions can be challenging, I have no doubt that we will support each other and our students to feel safe, supported and loved during this school year. Thank you for your collaboration and support to make Royle the special place that it is! I look forward to seeing you all soon and for another amazing year together!

Best,
Natasha Torre
Principal, Royle School