

DRAGON NEWS

A newsletter from Principal Collins and the DES PTA

December 2016

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

DAMASCUS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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301-253-8717

SCHOOL WEBSITE:
[http://
montgomeryschoolsmd.org/
schools/damascuses/](http://montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/damascuses/)

PRINCIPAL:
Bill Collins

EMAIL:
[William_J_Collins
@mcpsmd.org](mailto:William_J_Collins@mcpsmd.org)

TWITTER:
[@collinswj](https://twitter.com/collinswj)

PTA WEBSITE:
www.damascuspta.com

PTA EMAIL:
desptamail@gmail.com



I hope that everyone enjoyed their long weekend and had an opportunity to spend time with family and friends! The students and staff had a wonderful day at Grandparents' Day. I would like to thank all of the parent volunteers and staff members that made it such a great event. I would also like to thank Kidsco, the before and after care here at DES for donating their shuttle buses to assist in transporting our grandparents to and from the Weiss parking lot for the event. What a great day! This Monday, December 5 begins the PTA Holiday Shop and I will be there to open

the shopping with a few read alouds for our students that attend. We are also beginning to see the weather begin to turn colder. Please make sure that your children bring their jackets to school and are dressed for the weather. If the "feels like" temperature is 32 degrees or higher, the students will be going outside for recess. We are looking forward to another wonderful month. Take care and stay warm!

*~ Bill Collins
Principal*

Winter Weather: Stay in Touch with MCPS

Winter weather is coming soon. Please make sure emergency contact information on file at your child's school is up to date. MCPS offers numerous ways for parents to learn about school closures, delayed openings and early dismissals due to inclement weather. Receive text messages or emails from MCPS during weather-related emergencies and other major events that impact school system operations. Parents can also sign up to receive alerts specific to their child's school.

Alert MCPS

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/emergency/alertmcps.aspx>

Follow MCPS on Twitter @MCPS

Board of Education Approves Amendments to Capital Improvements Program

The Montgomery County Board of Education approved amendments to the district's six-year Capital Improvements Program (CIP) on November 21 that will help plan for future growth in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), while addressing capacity and facility issues throughout the district.

The Board approved a Fiscal Year 2018 Capital Budget appropriation request totaling \$411.7 million and an Amended Fiscal Year 2017–2022 Capital Improvements Program request totaling \$1.729 billion. The Board's amendments include expenditure shifts for five projects, two new boundary studies, and one site selection study. The Board set new boundaries for Bethesda-Chevy Chase Middle School #2 and Westland Middle School; approved Dr. Smith's request for a feasibility study for the relocation of the Alternative Education Programs; and approved several recommendations to address the current short- and long-term projected space deficits in the elementary, middle, and high schools in the Walter Johnson Cluster.

Superintendent Jack R. Smith submitted his recommended CIP amendments to the Board on October 27. The Board held a work session and two public hearings on Dr. Smith's recommendation before taking final action on Nov. 21. Every two years, the county approves a six-year CIP, which includes school construction and infrastructure projects. In off years, such as FY 2018, only amendments to the adopted CIP are considered.

The Board's request will now be submitted to the County Executive and the County Council for consideration. View the CIP online at:

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/planning/cipmaster.aspx>

MLK Literary and Visual Arts Contest Open to MCPS Students

Students at all grade levels are encouraged to participate in the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Literary Contest and Visual Arts Show. The 2017 theme is "Injustice Anywhere is a Threat to Justice Everywhere." The essays and artwork should reflect an understanding and appreciation of the ideals of Dr. King's life, achievements, and aspirations.

Literary entries should be 150 words or less and are due by **Friday, December 23**. Submit them to the MLK Essay Contest, c/o Montgomery County Office of Human Rights, 21 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, MD 20850 or email to human-rights.commission@montgomerycountymd.gov.

For visual arts entries, the contest is open to prints, posters, collages, murals, photographs, and all other two-dimensional visual art forms. Group projects are welcome. Send entries to Linda S. Adams, supervisor, Pre-K-12 Fine Arts, Carver Educational Services Center, Room 256, 850 Hungerford Dr., Rockville, MD 20850. **The deadline is Friday, December 23.**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In the spirit of the holiday season, I want to take a moment to thank all of the DES parents (and grandparents) who have given their time and talent to benefit our school. Whether you chair a committee, help out occasionally, or participate in our fundraisers, you all play a part in supporting our kids. You are an inspiration to me and make my job as PTA president a true pleasure. Thank you!

I would be amiss if I did not also thank the DES teachers and staff for all that you do. We could not do all of our PTA programs without your continued support. It takes a village. Thank you all!

As always, please feel free to contact me personally at northlandscaping@msn.com if you have any questions or concerns. Have a wonderful and safe holiday.

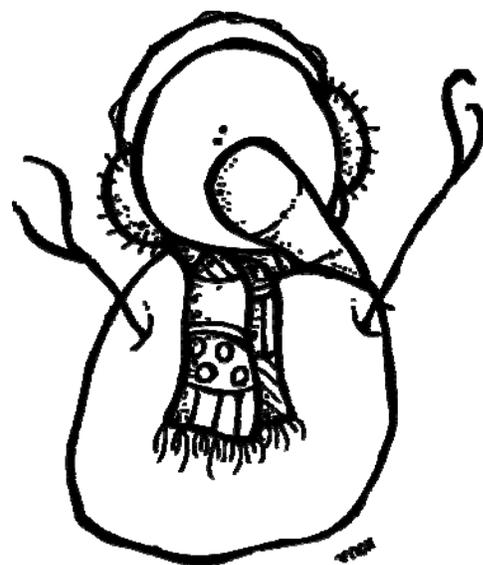
*~Melissa North
DES PTA President*



Damascus Elementary School PTA Board	
President	Melissa North
VP Finance	Brittany Marshall
VP Communications	Laurie Murtaugh
Treasurer	Lisa Willis
Recording Secretary	Beth Walter
Corresponding Secretary	Tara Owens
PTA Website	www.damascuspta.com
PTA Email	desptamail@gmail.com

UPCOMING EVENTS AND IMPORTANT DATES

- Dec. 5 InView Testing Grades 4-5
InView Testing Grades 2-3
PTA Holiday Shop, 6-8 p.m.
Mr. Collins will read from 7:00-7:30 p.m.
- Dec. 6 Holiday Shop
- Dec. 7 Holiday Shop – All Day
DES Spirit Day
InView Testing Grades 2-3
InView Testing Grades 3-4
- Dec. 8 Holiday Shop
- Dec. 8 InView Testing Grades 2-3
- Dec. 9 DES Fan Day
5th Grade to Baker MS for Winter Concert, 10:00 a.m. to noon
- Dec. 13 PTA Family Night at Chipotle, 4-8 p.m.
- Dec. 14 DES Spirit Day
- Dec. 16 DES Fan Day
Interims Go Home
Parents Helping Teachers Group, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- Dec. 21 DES Spirit Day
- Dec. 22 Kindergarten Gingerbread House Making, 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.
3rd Grade Poetry Reading - 2:45 – 3:30 p.m.
- Dec. 23 DES Fan Day
- Dec. 24-Jan. 2: Winter Break—NO SCHOOL



STAY CONNECTED

Are you receiving emails from the PTA? If not, email Laurie Murtaugh at **laurie.murtaugh@verizon.net** to be added to the list to stay up-to-date about upcoming events and activities. Did you know your Damascus Elementary School PTA has a Facebook page? "Like" us on Facebook to stay up-to-date on PTA news and activities.



<https://www.facebook.com/damascusPTA>

VOLUNTEER NEWS

Thanks to Our Volunteers

Fall is in full swing, and we have had so many amazing events that couldn't be possible without volunteers! October finished out the month with 208 volunteers giving 922 hours. November is off to a great start with 108 hours so far. We appreciate all of your time and effort! Remember that DES is required to submit volunteer hours to the Montgomery County central office each month. So if you do volunteer in the classroom, on a committee, at an event, or in any other way that benefits our school, please let me know (Christine at derbyjc@bellatlantic.net), so it can be included in our total hours that are submitted to Montgomery County each month.

I also wanted to take this opportunity to recognize some of the people who have given time and resources during the months of October and November.

Thank you to all of the parents and helpers who made the October Halloween parties possible. This was a wonderful event!

Thank you to Beth for organizing and all of the Grandparents Day helpers: Laurie, Kristin, Tara, Lisa, Melissa, Diane, Sherry, Christine, and Josh. This was truly a special day for students and grandparents alike.

Thank you to all who have been able to help with the Parents Helping Teachers workgroup. We have accomplished an amazing amount preparing classroom materials for our teachers.

Thank you to Laurie, Melissa, and Tara for their ongoing support of the Read-A-Thon as it came to a successful close.

Thank you to all of parents who chaperoned our reward walk to Burger King for ice cream.

Finally, thank you to all who help in the classroom with individual teachers, represent our school, and contribute their time in ways that may not have been mentioned. We appreciate you and all that you contribute!

Thank you so much for all that you do to make our school a special place! It makes a huge difference!

Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities

Parents Helping Teachers:

Fridays, December 16 and January 13 from 9:30-11:30 a.m. This is a drop in opportunity where we help make copies and educational materials to help teachers. Please meet us in the main office if you can. No experience necessary.

Holiday Shop:

Monday, December 5 from 6-8 p.m. and Tuesday, December 6 and Wednesday, December 7 during the school day. This is a huge event! We are looking for both adult and SSL volunteers to help our students shop and wrap. More information and sign up is available at

**[www.SignUpGenius.com/
go/20F0E49ABA929A31-damascus1](http://www.SignUpGenius.com/go/20F0E49ABA929A31-damascus1)**

or by contacting Christine via email at derbyjc@bellatlantic.net.

*~ Christine Derby, Chair
derbyjc@bellatlantic.net*



New Online Volunteer Training Requirement

If you come to help at school (including field trips), you will need to bring a photo ID to enter the building. Additionally, Montgomery County has a new volunteer requirement that they feel will help to keep our children safe. The new online training on Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect is designed to help volunteers be aware of signs of potential abuse and neglect and how to handle situations where you might suspect abuse and neglect. This training is required for adults who would like to volunteer within the school building or attend field trips. The same training is required for any Montgomery County school including Baker MS and Damascus HS.

The training is available online at:

**[www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/
childabuseandneglect/](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/childabuseandneglect/)**

The training takes about 25 minutes. At the end you will be provided with a confirmation number and you will receive an email verification as well. You will need to show this email to the office when you come to volunteer. If you have any questions or concerns, including the need for computer access, please contact Christine Derby at derbyjc@bellatlantic.net.

Parents Helping Teachers Workgroup

Thanks to Roberta Sherwood, Teresa Tenzier, Jody Chapin, Carla VonAgner, Anna Egan, Nora Hernandez, Christine Derby, and Gerry Choulas for helping out at the Parents Helping Teachers Workgroup on Friday, November 4, and thanks to Teresa Tenzier, Jody Chapin, Carla VonAgner, Tara Owens, Christine Derby, and Gerry Choulas for helping out on Friday, November 18. We were able to complete many work requests for the teachers, and we thank you for sharing your time to help out the teachers and staff.

Our next two workgroups will be meet on:

Friday, December 16, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Friday, January 13, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

If your schedule permits, please come and join us. We meet in the front office. Feel free to bring your little ones and we will teach you anything you need to know.

*~ Gerry McBrinn-Choulas
Co-chair*

thank you!

The Staff Appreciation Committee would like to give a HUGE thank you to the following volunteers; Debbie Gallagher, Kristin Peake, Stephanie Desmond, Jaime Kemp, Tom and Kathleen Lopez, Krista Rakovan, Gerry Choulos, Karen Reyes, Melissa North, Michelle Ibino, Nicole Frasco, Christine Derby, Erin Luther, Naxelly Nunez, Faizah Khan, Stacey Fort and Jen Marcano. With their help, and the help of some anonymous bakers, we were able to raffle off more than 35 desserts to the staff of DES. The staff was so thankful and raved about all of the delicious effort that was put into making their holiday even better. Please continue to check backpacks and emails for the next volunteer opportunity.

~ Kelly Jonas, Chair



Send your box tops and labels into your child's classroom. At the end of each month the class in each grade that collects the most will receive a treat!

PAINLESS FUNDRAISING

Many companies and stores offer money and credits for supplies and equipment to schools based on the purchases of customers. THAT'S RIGHT, you can help OUR SCHOOL support OUR KIDS just by doing your regular household shopping – at no additional cost to you!

Box Tops for Education

Labels for Education

Coke Rewards Points

Amazon Smile

Giant

Safeway

Harris Teeter

Find more information on the PTA website at:

www.damascuspta.com/fundraising/

Reading Incentive Program

The Read-A-Thon has wrapped up but that doesn't mean our reading slows down! Starting December 1 we will be sending out a monthly calendar for our Reading Incentive Program that will run through March. Students that read a total of 350 minutes per month will receive a FREE Pizza Hut Coupon and be entered into a monthly drawing to have their Pizza Hut lunch brought to school and a party during lunch time with fellow winners.

In addition to the monthly prizes, if a student turns in three of the four calendars they will be invited to an end of the year ICE CREAM PARTY!

We would love for you to encourage your child to read and participate in this great program!

~ Tara Owens, Chair

WANTED: PICTURES!

We know you are taking some great pictures of your child during DES and PTA sponsored events. We are looking for candid pictures to possibly be used in our DES Yearbook. Did you take any pictures at Char-Lene Farm, Pastries with Parents, Passport to Reading Night, Movie Night, Parent Observation Day, Mad Science, or any other school event? Please send your pictures to Stephanie Desmond at

helpinghands331@gmail.com.

You can continue to send your pictures to Stephanie throughout the school year. If you really love taking pictures and attending our fun DES events, consider being a school photographer to help us capture the entire event!



Plan Ahead for the 2017–2018 School Year

It's never too early to start planning! The Board of Education has approved the start and end dates for the 2017–2018 school year. The school year will begin on Tuesday, September 5, 2017, and the last day of school will be no later than Friday, June 15, 2018.

In August, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan issued an executive order that mandates all Maryland public schools start after Labor Day, conclude by June 15, and include 180 days of instruction. The Board had approved a resolution on October 10 stating its preference to adopt a calendar for the 2017–2018 school year that would begin prior to Labor Day and asked Superintendent Jack R. Smith to apply to the State Board for a waiver of the start date before Labor Day. However, MCPS is not likely to be eligible for a waiver due to Governor Hogan's amended executive order that has further restricted the conditions under which local school boards could apply for and be granted a waiver of the time frame.



There are many specific components, including professional days and make-up days for emergency or inclement weather school closings, that MCPS staff will need to further analyze to determine how best to implement the instructional and operational aspects of the 2017–2018 school year in the required time frame.

MCPS staff will continue to work through the implementation issues for the structure of the school year and bring one or more proposed calendars to the Board for action at the December 13, 2016, meeting.

Read-A-Thon

We just wrapped up our third annual Read-A-Thon and it was A LOT of fun! In 15 days, our students read 134,857 minutes and raised \$6,816. The teachers and staff rewarded the students for their hard work by participating in a relay race at the Read-A-Thon assembly, which ended with Mr. Wainwright and Mr. Collins digging through whipped cream to find book worms – without using their hands! It was silly and fun and the kids had a great time. While everyone who participated in the Read-A-Thon was a winner, we recognized the top two fundraisers and top two readers in each class and rewarded them with a walking field trip to Burger King for a special treat. A HUGE thank you to the MCPD and Damascus Fire Department and Ed Trybus for coordinating the escort to keep our students safe on our walk to Burger King.

The third and fourth highest readers in each class received a special lunch with their teacher and a coupon for an ice cream cone. Students who were both the top readers AND top fundraisers got an extra reward of playing the Wii with Mrs. Rose during recess. Lastly, the top reader and top fundraiser in each class were entered into a drawing to win a Kindle. We awarded two to grades K-2 and two to grades 3-5.

The Read-A-Thon was so much fun and we are already making plans for next year. If you have any feedback or ideas to make the Read-A-Thon even better, please email me at laurie.murtaugh@verizon.net. Thank you to everyone who supported the Read-A-Thon.

~ Laurie Murtaugh, Chair

What are you thankful for?

We asked this question of our DES students and here is what they said:

“I am thankful for _____!”

“my Daddy getting out of the hospital safely.”
Mason Walter, 4th Grade, Spiridopoulos

“my mom, dad, and sister.”
Joshua Thompson, 1st Grade, Mrs. Hesse’s Class

“my family and my friends.”
Taryn Thompson, 1st Grade, Ms. Goldberg’s Class

“my bus driver, Ms. Tina.”
Katherine Derby, 5th Grade, Mrs. Long’s Class

“my family and my puppy, Shelby.”
Haley Regan, Kindergarten, Mrs. Harrigan’s Class

“my family and all sports!”
Colton North, 2nd Grade, Mrs. Weakley’s Class

“family, friends, life, oh and TECHNOLOGY!”
Kade Owens, 5th Grade, Mrs. Moxley’s Class

“my house and food.”
Maggie Murtaugh, 3rd Grade, Mrs. Weaver’s Class

NEXT MONTH:

“My favorite holiday tradition is...”

We want to hear about any holiday you celebrate: Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, New Year’s Day, etc. Maybe you have an “elf on your shelf”, play family football on Thanksgiving, or take a vacation over winter break.

We welcome pictures of any holiday traditions you would like to share!

You can send your pictures directly to Diane Loomis at diane@loomisdesign.com. Remember to include your name and grade.
