

# MT. EPHRAIM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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[www.mtephraimschools.org](http://www.mtephraimschools.org)

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August 31, 2016

Happy New School Year!

I was doing some calculations the other day (*because I have so much free time – lol*) ... and I figured that with my own schooling, my three kids' schooling, and my career – As of next week I will have experienced 99 school year openings!

I am looking forward to my 4<sup>th</sup> opening here in Mt. Ephraim. If it's your last child who will be graduating 8<sup>th</sup> grade this year – *You made it!* If it's your first child entering pre-school or kindergarten – *Welcome!* And everyone in between – *I look forward to seeing you all again!*

I have a few updates that I'd like you all to be aware of now so that you have time to talk to your children and ask questions.

- In the main District office (Kings Highway entrance at the Mary Bray School), we have a new Assistant to the Superintendent. Regretfully, Mrs. Alibrando left us back in June. We miss her greatly but are content in knowing she is happy and thriving in a new position with the Glassboro Public Schools. We are delighted to have found Mrs. Susan Kerr who will be the new face and voice you will meet if you need anything from the Superintendent's office.
- We welcome
  - Mrs. Danielle LaBella to our 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade team as our special education English Language Arts teacher. Mrs. LaBella is taking over for Mrs. Sharon Eichman who retired last school year.
  - Mrs. Alison Riddle is taking over for Mrs. Mary Manion who also retired. You may know Mrs. Riddle from our Shining Stars Program. She is a certified music teacher and is so excited to be taking over the 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade Band and Chorus program.
  - Mrs. Jennifer Immendorf will be taking over for Mrs. Colleen Waters who retired from 1<sup>st</sup> grade last June. Mrs. Immendorf filled-in as a long-term substitute last school year in kindergarten and did a fantastic job. Mrs. Immendorf lives right here in Mt. Ephraim and is really excited about her commute.
  - Mrs. Debra Rice has moved to Mary Bray from the middle school and is taking over for Mrs. Laurie McCloskey who also entered the world of retirement last year. Mrs. Jennifer Blanchard also came to Mary Bray from Kershaw and will be our third 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher.

Here is the [link to](#) all of the papers in the *dreaded First Day Packet*. I thought some of you might want to get a jump on these documents. There are three sections to the packet. **Most important is Section 1 which contains mandatory forms that we need returned for every single child.** Section 2 contains optional forms. And Section 3 is a collection of informational documents that you might want to put on the fridge for later reference. <https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B09laRIHH98jWUx2UjFXNkRzZlE&usp=sharing>

## Important Regarding Communication Blasts

- Please watch the 70 second video at this link <https://vimeo.com/173531877>
- Then visit this link to create an account and give your permission for us to send you phone, emails, and/or text blasts <https://infocenter.schoolmessenger.com/#/home>
- A new federal rule will not allow us to send any non-emergency messages to you via our blast system without your permission.

On a separate hand-out I have taken some time to share some details with you about some changes we have in our District this school year. As you may know, our district, along with a multitude of others in the state, hit some budgetary obstacles last spring. Our Board of Education had to make some very quick and difficult decisions. With input from Mr. Hunter, our staff, and members of the community, I was able to come up with a plan that minimized student programming and staff cuts. Unfortunately we did, however, suffer some.

As with any problem, there are many possible solutions – but in the end – one has to be chosen. And that means that proponents of the other solutions will end up disappointed and/or believing the decision made is wrong. This is the nature of the beast. What we need from you is support and trust in the decisions that have been made – even if they are not the ones you were hoping for. The only way our district will remain strong and move forward is if we work together to get through the obstacles.

The Board and I will be working this year on a district-wide, three-to-five year strategic plan. We believe that looking into the future and working backwards is the way that we can ensure last-minute surprises, like last year's budget issues, will be less likely to happen. For the strategic planning process to be successful, input is needed from staff, parents, and the community. Please keep a look-out for information coming home about the strategic planning process and please consider participating by attending a few meetings. It is not a long-term commitment. We need your input and you need to be heard.

I wish everyone a happy and healthy school year. *See you next week!*

Leslie Koller-Walker  
Superintendent of Schools

**I want to take this time to provide you some facts and hopefully put some incorrect rumors to rest....**

**BAND & CHORUS** - There WILL be Band AND Chorus in all grades 4-8. Grade 4 will begin in marking period 2. All other grades will begin at the start of the year.

**ART** - There will be no formal Art instruction as part of the special schedule rotation. My plan is to re-staff our Art teacher position in next school year's budget as long as funds are available.

**WORLD LANGUAGE**

- There will be one marking period of Spanish being taught by a certificated World Language teacher in grades 3, 4 & 5.
- There will be three marking periods of Spanish being taught by a certificated World Language teacher in grades 6, 7, & 8.
- Grades K, 1, & 2 will have the mandated World Language standards addressed by the regular classroom teachers within other subject lessons.

**SPECIALS ROTATION BY GRADE**

- Grades K & 2 will alternate Phys Ed/Health with General Music for the entire school year.
- Grade 1 will alternate Phys Ed/Health with General Music and Media Center for the entire school year.
- Grade 3 will alternate Phys Ed/Health with World Language (Spanish) and Media Center for marking period 1 and then Phys Ed/Health with General Music and Media Center for the remaining marking periods.
- Grades 4, & 5 will alternate Phys Ed/Health with World Language (Spanish) for marking period 1 and then Phys Ed/Health with General Music for the remaining marking periods.
- Grades 6, 7, & 8 will alternate Phys Ed/Health with General Music for marking period 1 and then Phys Ed/Health with World Language (Spanish) for the remaining marking periods.

**CHROMEBOOKS**

School year 2016-17 was year three of our first Chromebook plan which provided one-to-one take-home devices to all students in grades 6, 7, & 8 (140 devices) and one-to-two, stay-in-school devices for grades 3, 4 & 5 (67 devices).

In school years 2014-15 and 2015-16 ...

- Of the 67 stay-in-school devices – there were two repairs needed
- Of the 140 take-home devices – there 82 repairs needed; 12 were non-repairable and used for parts.

We had a hard time keeping up and we were worried about school year 2016-17 because these devices are now going into their third year.

After two years of “trying it out”, it was decided – even before the budget problems last spring - that the repair rate of the take-home-devices was more than our district could handle both financially as well as physically. We had already decided that in school year 2017-18, when the three-year lease on our existing devices was complete and new devices would need to be purchased, that students would still have one-to-one Chromebooks assigned to them – but these devices would remain in school.

One of our staff cuts with our recent budget problem was our Educational Technology Coordinator. This was a full-time position and its loss has cut our district technology staff in half. We now have one person in charge of all of our Chromebooks, two school media centers full of computers, plus all classroom, teacher, and office hardware and software.

We are worried that if we send the three-year-old Chromebooks home with our 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders this year, that our one-person technology staff will not be able to get the broken ones fixed and back in students' hands fast enough as well as maintain the rest of the district technology.

As a result, we will not be sending home Chromebooks with any students this school year 2016-17.

All 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grader students will still have a one-to-one device to be used all day in school. In addition we have arranged for our Kershaw Media Center to remain open until 3:45 each day so that students can stay and use their Chromebooks here in District.

Obviously there will be no need for parents to come into the school and sign the devices out. And there will be no User Fee.

Just like in grades 5 and lower, all of the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, & 8<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum can be accessed with student log-ins on home computers. Teachers will also be sensitive when assigning electronic homework and projects to grades 6, 7, & 8 as is done in all of the other grades.

If there is a hardship and a family does not have access to a computer at home, please contact the District and we may be able to work with you to help you get access for your student.

*(Continued on reverse)*

## GRADES 1 & 3 – LARGE GRADE-LEVEL SIZE & INSTRUCTION

- There will be three classes of grade 1 and three classes of grade 3. This is to allow smaller class sizes due to the large number of students in each of these grades. There are two classes of each grades K, 2, and 4.
- All of our 4<sup>th</sup> graders and most of our 3<sup>rd</sup> graders will have departmentalized English Language Arts and Math instruction. Mrs. Caton and Mrs. Rice will teach both grade levels of Math and Mrs. Harris and Mrs. Shapley will teach both grades ELA. Because we have three classes of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, some of our 3<sup>rd</sup> graders will have the same teacher, Mrs. Blanchard, for both ELA and Math.

**RTI** – Our Response to Intervention program will remain at both schools this school year. At Kershaw, however, there will not be an English Language Arts or a Math specialist as there had been for the pasts two years and as will remain at Mary Bray. RTI at Kershaw will be carried out by our regular and special education teachers. They participated fully in past years and are well-prepared for this. In addition, our two specialists housed at Mary Bray, will be providing support to Kershaw throughout the year in RTI.

## PTO MEETINGS – UPDATES FROM THE SUPER

I will be hosting an update session before and after each PTO meeting this school year. Please come early for the 7:00pm PTO meeting and meet me in the Mary Bray Media Center at 6:15 .... Or stay after the meeting is over at about 7:45 until 8:30ish. Below are my agenda topics. I hope you will consider coming.

- **September 20 – Super Update Agenda (6:15 & 7:45):** The 16-17 Budget Situation, Chromebooks, 2016-17 District Goals
- **October 18 - Super Update Agenda (6:15 & 7:45):** Standards-Based Report Cards, Retention as an Intervention
- **November 15 - Super Update Agenda (6:15 & 7:45):** The new NJ Student Learning Standards (new Common Core), The Every Child Succeeds Act (new No Child Left Behind)
- **January 17 - Super Update Agenda (6:15 & 7:45):** Response to Intervention (RTI), Benchmark Assessments, Gifted and Talented Program
- **February 21 - Super Update Agenda (6:15 & 7:45):** How Our School District Works, The School District Budgeting Process
- **March 21 - Super Update Agenda (6:15 & 7:45):** The 2017-18 District Budget
- **April 18 - Super Update Agenda (6:15 & 7:45):** PARCC, Standards-Based/Standardized Tests
- **May 16 - Super Update Agenda (6:15 & 7:45):** The 2016-17 District Goal Progress, New 2017-18 District Goals, Open Topics

Here are some quick links that will be helpful for you to have. They can also be found on the district website at [www.mtephraimschools.org](http://www.mtephraimschools.org)

### MEPS Facebook – School & Classroom News

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Mount-Ephraim-Public-Schools/366880683326654?ref=hl>

### Mrs. Koller’s Facebook – District & Education News

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Mrs-Koller/886156454779091?sk=timeline>

### Oncourse Student-Parent Grade & Attendance Portal

<https://www.oncourseconnect.com/account/login>

### MEPS District Breakfast and Lunch Menus

<https://sites.google.com/a/mtephraimschools.com/mepshome/menus>

### MEPS Thursday BackPack

<https://sites.google.com/a/mtephraimschools.com/mepshome/thursday-backpack>

### MEPS District Policies

<https://sites.google.com/a/mtephraimschools.com/mepshome/district-policies>

### Renaissance Star Home Connect

<https://hosted276.renlearn.com/365206/homeconnect/>

### Pearson EText Home Log-in for:

- Reading Street
- Envision
- Digits
- Common Core Literature
- Algebra I

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B091aRIHH98jX3pvWmt5MjUwY3c/view?usp=sharing>