



City Honors School

AT FOSDICK-MASTEN PARK

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August 2018

Dear CHS Families:

We have been blessed with a gorgeous Buffalo summer, but it's time to turn to another year of learning on The Hilltop. Our team has been hard at work to be sure your child has a positive start to the school year. Here are some important and exciting things you should know about this school year:

- The **first day of school for students** will be **Thursday, September 6. This is a full day of school.**
- **Parent/Teacher Get-Acquainted Night** will be held on **Thursday, September 13, from 6-8pm.** A separate letter will be sent home to all families during the first week of school explaining Parent/Teacher Get-Acquainted Night.
- Our annual **Back-to-School Picnic for families** will be held on **Friday, September 21 from 5-8pm.** A flyer about the picnic can be found in this packet.
- We have modified the start of homeroom, which will provide students with more time to make it on-time and also eat a school breakfast. **Homeroom will now begin at 8:12 AM. The final bell of the day for dismissal remains 2:45 PM.** I have enclosed our annual *Back-to-School Survival Guide* and other documents to be sure your family begins the school year successfully.
- Last year, all students in grades five and six were issued a laptop computer for use during the school day. We are thrilled to announce that this school year, all students in grades seven through twelve will also be issued a laptop. Students must pick up their laptops each morning during homeroom, and return their laptops in 8th period, or before they leave school if picked up early. We began the process of providing training for our teachers on how to integrate laptops into their instructional practices last school year. The district offered additional training throughout the summer and on-going professional development will take place in 18-19. Students will be assigned their computer during the first week of school, as well as a handbook and parent/student agreement on usage and care of the laptop. 1:1 computers have been successfully rolled out throughout the district and we have the benefit of clearly established procedures and solutions to any issues that might arise. We are encouraging each family to equip their child with a laptop carrying bag to protect their child's machine and make it convenient to carry. The dimensions of the laptops are 12"L x 8.5"W. The same laptop will stay with each child for their duration at the school or until the inventory is refreshed so each child is encouraged to treat their computer with great care.

Now that every CHS student will have a computer at their disposal, we have closed one of our last two freestanding computer labs and converted it for use as a traditional classroom. In our last remaining computer lab, we have installed a zSpace virtual reality (VR) lab. zSpace allows students to learn STEAM subjects using immersive images that they can move and manipulate in applications across a wide-range of standards-aligned curriculum. These all-in-one-computers combine elements of VR and AR (augmented reality) to create mixed reality computing experiences that are interactive and lifelike. Each all-in-one computer features tracking eye wear and a stylus,

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allowing students to interact with objects and really understand the science behind them. Unlike other virtual reality solutions, such as head-mounted displays, it enables interaction and group collaboration. It also empowers students to “learn by doing” in an environment where it is easy to undo mistakes, make changes, and not worry about material costs or clean up.

- All classrooms will continue to have several desktop portals in the event that their laptop is being serviced. All of these stations have been replaced with new machines this summer or are in the process of being replaced.
- On a further technology note, the district has notified us that within the next year all of our current interactive white boards (IWB’s) in each classroom will be replaced by a more contemporary product.
- Our master scheduling this summer was delayed due to District software issues. Although most schedules in IC are now complete, as always students should not become attached to anything they see in the portal. Official student schedules will be handed out at distribution locations on the first day of school. Signs with schedule pick-up information will be clearly posted for students as they enter the building and staff will be stationed around the building to support students with questions. Grade five and six students will report to the school auditorium at the start of the school on September 6.
- The BPS Athletic Department has launched a new system to make all sport team schedules available in a live, online format through the “Arbiter Live” scheduling system. Parents and students can also subscribe to their favorite team(s) to receive scheduling alerts. Please use the following link to access the schedules for all CHS sports teams:
<http://www.arbiterlive.com/School/4358>
- We are excited to announce that we will expand our partnership with the Erie County Council for Prevention of Alcohol and Substance Abuse (ECCPASA) and local law enforcement by providing proactive parent awareness forums this fall. In order to become more informed and work together to prevent potential danger or tragedy, these forums will offer education and discussion on the signs and symptoms of drug and alcohol abuse, current trends to be aware of among our children, and treatment options for those who are struggling with drug/alcohol abuse. There will be two forums available, one for grades 5-8 parents, and the other for grade 9-12. Parents are welcome to attend both sessions. The middle school focused session emphasizes prevention, while the high school session focuses on the current trends seen among high school students. We would encourage every parent to attend these sessions, as they are informative, relevant, and necessary as your child enters middle and high school. No school or students are immune to these dangers. The sessions will take place at CHS on :

Wednesday, September 26, 2018 6pm-8pm (HS Parents)

Wednesday, October 3, 2018 6pm-8pm (MS Parents)

Our students will continue to receive training sessions twice a year from ECCPASA counselors. Details will be sent out in the early fall. Thank you to our school social worker, Mrs. Vinkle, for coordinating our activities with ECCPASA. Questions should be directed to Mrs. Vinkle at jvinkle@buffaloschools.org.

- Please welcome new assistant principal Ms. Carla McDow. Mrs. Barinas left us in June to serve our District as a Central Office Director. Ms. McDow comes to us from the Aloma D. Johnson Charter School, where she served as Dean of Students. She holds an undergraduate degree from Canisius College and masters degrees in social work, criminal justice, and educational administration from the University at Buffalo, Niagara University and Canisius College respectively. We expect her wide variety of leadership experiences and education to benefit our school.

- Please welcome the following teachers who will be joining our faculty at City Honors:
 - Mr. Daniel Browne: Grade 9-12 STARS Mathematics
 - Ms. Danielle Butler: Grade 5 Mathematics
 - Mrs. Helen Butler-Ceppaglia: Orchestra*
 - Mr. Brian Jackson, RN: School Nurse
 - Ms. Brittany Mecca: Grade 9 English Language Arts*
 - Mr. Nicholas Paterson: Grade 5 English Language Arts**
 - Mrs. Michelle Randel: Home and Careers
 - Ms. Yomaira Prusak: Spanish*
 - *Part-time teacher
 - **Temporary teacher for Mrs. Luongo, Grade 5

At the time of this printing, we are still waiting for assignment of a temporary teacher to begin the year for Mrs. Shea, 7th grade ELA. Thank you to all of the parent and teacher representatives who volunteered their time this summer to serve on the hiring teams to select full-time teachers.

- Students in grade six at CHS will join the Global Scholars Program this year. This effort will be spearheaded by Mrs. Dylewski, Ms. Moda, Mrs. Reiss, Mrs. McIntyre and Ms. McDow. We believe that this program will reinforce the goals of the IB Middle Years Program in important ways. Global Scholars is a tech-savvy, direct, peer-to-peer learning program designed to develop cultural understanding, knowledge of the world, and global competency skills through direct communication in a digital classroom. CHS students will use technology to study annual theme-based curricula with students their age around the world. This year’s curriculum, called “World of Water,” explores the role of water in our lives, cities, and world. Students will discover the importance of water to the unique culture, commerce, and daily life of their own cities and cities around the world. At the same time, students learn from one another as they investigate some of today’s most pressing environmental issues: water pollution, the impact of climate change, and the challenge of providing equal access to clean, safe drinking water.
- English Language Arts is an area we are seeking to continue to innovate in order to improve student learning and engagement. We have made good progress the past few years at the middle school level, but there is still important work to be done. Starting this year, students in grade 10 will take the Advanced Placement Language and Composition course. We previously offered the AP Literature course at this grade level. After several years of study, feedback and following the recommendation of our district ELA Director and Chief Academic Officer, we have made this change to fill a significant gap in our curriculum. We previously provided our students in grades 10-12 with three full years focused on developing literary commentary skills. AP Language and Composition develops an appreciation of non-fiction text, helps students hone their rhetorical writing skills and find their own voice as prose writers. AP Language is better aligned to the reading and writing students will do in college (with the exception of literature majors). The AP Language and Composition course receives high marks from students for interest and accessibility. Literary commentary will remain the focus of grade 11 and 12 ELA studies through the two-year IB Literature course. Mr. Belge and Ms. Ziolkowski have both received College Board certified training to teach the AP Language and Composition course. Mr. Belge, who will teach the bulk of the sections, taught AP Language for five years at his previous school.

In the past, our ELA course titles at CHS represented acceleration, but we had no formal curricula in place if the course was not an AP or IB course. Grade nine was the last grade level to make the transition to a formal curriculum. Ninth grade students will now use the BPS grade ten ELA curriculum. We have seen improved alignment and student success at the other grade levels where the curricula has been formalized. We anticipate the same here.

To support our continued progress and successful course transitions in English Language Arts, the BPS Director of ELA, Dr. Julie Romain, has established a satellite desk at CHS and will be present for the foreseeable future to provide our ELA teachers with heightened support alongside our instructional coach.

- The number one question our administrative team has received this summer is, “where do matters stand between the Buffalo Schools and the Buffalo Teacher Federation on the issue of teacher duties.” The news on this front is mixed. For your convenience, we have enclosed a summary. If you have been following local media reports, you likely already have this information.

In my letter to you dated January 31 of this year discussing this matter, I closed by saying, “you have my assurance that student learning will continue and that our school will endure.” Following this letter, some asked how I could be so confident in this. It is a fair question, and I have to admit that this is a statement that I don’t think I would have been willing to make earlier in my career. However, I know we will still be able to offer your child the best, because we have had to work with far less in the past. When I arrived in 2005, we were working with bare boned staffing due to cuts. In 2008 we saw a financial crisis that meant even more cuts. At another point we lost five teachers in the same summer, all bumped by more senior teachers due to a district-wide cuts. All this time, our student performance and programs for support continued to improve. Even with the loss of teachers to start this year, we are still far, far ahead of our staffing in the past.

As a history teacher, my tendency is to gain perspective by lifting the lens even more. The school community at this campus endured WWI, the flu pandemic of 1918, the Great Depression, WWII, and numerous additional events that affected working and learning conditions at the school. Not only did they survive, but the reputation of this school as a place of learning continued in an upward trajectory. Perhaps it is no accident that the school motto of Masten Park High School was, “It Can Be Done.” This was a simple, but stubborn message reflecting a growth mindset, long before the contemporary revelations of the field of mindset psychology.

I am not going to give up hope that a thoughtful resolution will be found to the labor impasse. But in the meantime, I have no intention of seeing our students take a single step back in their learning or how we care for them. We have seen tougher times before and we are not going to let this end our culture of perpetual self-assessment and improvement. I hope you can see from the list of items above that we are moving full speed ahead for our students. We ask you to join us.

Please review your child’s progress on their CHS summer reading to be sure it is completed. These lists were distributed to students at the end of the school year and are posted on our website at www.cityhonors.org under the Parent Resources tab. Teachers in ELA classes will be engaging students in assignments and discussions related to summer reading assignments as the school year starts.

We have an exciting year of learning planned for our students. Our faculty, staff, and administrative team look forward to welcoming your child back on September 6!

Sincerely,



William A. Kresse, Ph.D.
Principal