



Excel in Mind, Body and Character

George Mason High School Newsletter

Tyrone Q. Byrd, Principal

December 2011

Dear Mustang Parents and Guardians,

Writer and editor Carl Sandburg said “Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you.” This has been an amazing semester. I’m confident that this community spends a large portion of our collective coins caring for the children we all love. Thanks on behalf of the entire George Mason faculty and staff for your enduring efforts to support us as we serve the children of the City of Falls Church. The fortitude of this community was tested deeply during the first semester. The loss of our beloved Richard challenged our understanding of time and exactly how time is measured. Behind the leadership of our children, we came together and found solace in our embrace as a family. We celebrated Richard’s life, we endured the grief and sorrow and we simultaneously attended to the important tasks at hand. I’m so very proud and honored to be a member of this family and I look forward to an exceptional second semester.

You will have access to your child’s interim grades at 8:00 a.m. on the morning of Monday, December 19. Please encourage your children to utilize AccessGM to its fullest potential. Each year we have enhanced the level of communication through this relatively new technology in an effort to provide you and your family with accurate, timely, and relevant information regarding the academic standing of your child. We also ask that you promote the effective use of the important school enrichment and remediation resources we provide. We are collectively committed to the Mustang Block, Mathematics Lab, and Writing Lab and we are confident that your child will benefit greatly from using each resource regularly.

A reflection of our first semester achievements:

- Girls and Boys Cross Country State Championships
- Four Outstanding Nights of *Thoroughly Modern Millie*
- JV Show
- Jamnesty Concert
- Historic Volleyball Season and Playoff Run
- Outstanding Fall Cheerleading Season
- Successful Golf Season
- Hard Fought Football Season
- Successful Blood Drive
- Successful Winter Wishes Campaign
- Awesome Winter Band and Choral Concerts
- Successful Start of the Scholastic Bowl Season

Thank you for your continued support as we collaboratively endeavor to Excel in Mind, Body, and Character. Have a safe and restful holiday season.

Sincerely,

Go Mustangs!

**George Mason offices will be closed
from Friday, December 23 to
Monday, January 2, 2012.**

Tyrone Q. Byrd
Principal

Pedestrian Safety...Notes from Officer Rau...

Your student's safety is our number one concern! Staff members, parents and community members have brought to our attention some dangerous behaviors of *some* George Mason student pedestrians as they travel to and from school! Students have been seen crossing Route 7 directly in front of the school and standing on the median strip as opposed to using the crosswalk. Others have been seen running in the crosswalk when they do not have the right-of-way causing vehicles to slam on brakes or use other aversion tactics! Yet others have been seen crossing Haycock Road without the crosswalk protected by Falls Church Police Crossing Guards. These careless and reckless behaviors can easily result in a tragedy!

Not only is this behavior dangerous, it is also illegal. The Code of Virginia states that pedestrians "shall cross, wherever possible, only at intersections or marked crosswalks..." A pedestrian who violates the law can receive a summons to appear in court and be fined for violating the law. Please review these legal, safe and common sense practices with your student. His/her safety is far more precious than the seconds "saved" by crossing illegally.

If your student needs to leave school during the day for any reason

...please send a note with him/her that same day stating the *time of* and the *reason for* the departure. In this way, the student can notify the teacher before class starts of her/his early departure; the teacher can apprise him/her of assignments or other vital information before class starts, and your student can *quietly depart* at the appointed time.

We know that sometimes there will be changed appointments or emergency scheduling over which you have no control. When that happens, we must send security to knock on the classroom door to request that your student be excused. (Sometimes the disruption comes right when a student or group of students is in the midst of an important presentation to classmates.)

For the same reasons stated above, our firm procedure with regard to forgotten items brought from home or messages from you is this: We will post the student's name in the main lobby to indicate that s/he needs to stop in to see the secretary to retrieve the item or message.

Your understanding and cooperation is greatly appreciated. It is the integrity of each student's academic experience that we must always seek to protect. Thank you!!!

Important Dates

Please note that some of these dates have changed since the beginning of school and some other changes may still occur.

December 19

Interims available on AccessGM

December 22

Holiday Early Release—1:45 p.m.

December 23- January 2

Winter Break

January 3

School Reopens

January 4

PTSA Meeting

7:30 p.m. – Library

January 5

- IB Forum
9:30 a.m. – Auditorium
- IB Awards Ceremony
7:00 p.m. – Auditorium

January 11

Early Release Wednesday – 1:45 p.m.

January 11

Parent Walk-In (PWI)

7:15 a.m. – 7:45 a.m.

Mustang Café

January 12

IB Information Night

7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Mustang Café

January 14

VCU Festival of Winds and Percussion

January 14

It's Academic Taping

NBC4

4001 Nebraska Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20016

Audience should arrive at 2:00 pm.

Game will air February 18 at 10:30 am on NBC4.

January 16

Martin Luther King Day

All-Staff Holiday

January 23, 24, 25 and 26

Semester Exams

January 24

Special Education Parent Meeting

Mustang Café – B121

8:15 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

January 25

Early Release Wednesday – 1:45 p.m.

January 26

End 2nd Quarter/1st Semester

January 27

Professional Day

No School for Students

January 30

Begin 3rd Quarter/2nd Semester

February 2

Report Cards distributed during Homeroom

Junior & Sophomore College & Career Unit

Juniors recently completed the college and career unit through English classes and sophomores through PE. Students were reintroduced to the career and college search program in Naviance. If you are interested in receiving your own log-in for Family Connection contact Judy Bracken at brackenj@fccps.org. Be sure to include your student's full name and grade.

Every junior will receive a pass to meet with Mrs. Bracken for a one-on-one appointment to discuss their post secondary college and career plan within the next few months.

THE FOLLOWING ARE STEPS TO BE TAKEN WHEN YOUR CHILD IS WITHDRAWING FROM SCHOOL:

STEP 1:

Email BirdB@fccps.org at least one week prior to your leave date to notify us of your withdrawal and the students last expected day at George Mason. Please also include a request for any records you will need mailed to the new school or to you after withdrawing. **If nothing is requested, George Mason will send records to the transferring school once a request is received.**

STEP 2:

Print the **Withdrawal Form** that will be emailed to you in response to Step 1 or you may pick up the form in the GMHS Counseling Office.

STEP 3:

Parent completes the school/forwarding address, transfer acknowledgement (*under the teacher table*) and signs the form.

STEP 4:

The student is to take the Withdrawal Form to each teacher and return his/her books at that time. A current grade will then be given for each course.

NOTE: Because a final cumulative transcript or report card may not be available at the time of withdrawal, the teachers provide this grade to use until the final transcript can be provided.

STEP 5:

The student visits the school nurse, librarian, college/career counselor and financial secretary to sign the form; ensuring that all items have been returned and no fines are due.

STEP 6:

The student **returns the completed Withdrawal Form to the Counseling office on his/her last day in attendance.**

NOTE: If the form is not completed and RETURNED, the student's academic records may not be released.

A Message from the Clinic

Now that the cold/flu season is here many students will become ill. If this happens at school, please arrange to have your student picked up as soon as possible. Space is limited in the Health Room and a sick student will be more comfortable at home. Parents, please remind your students if they are feeling ill to go to the Health Room and follow proper check-out procedures.

Please check your student in the morning before s/he comes to school. If s/he has been ill during the night with flu-like symptoms and complains of not feeling well, throwing up and/or has a temperature of 100.0° F, please keep him/her at home. S/he is not likely to start feeling any better. Just a minute or two in the morning may save you a trip to school later in the day to pick up a sick child.

Remember, fever is an important symptom. During illness your student's temperature may be normal in the morning, but will usually rise during the day. When temperature is elevated, it is important to keep your child home until it has been normal for 24 hours. Students who come back to school too soon can have a relapse and then lose additional time from class.

If you have any questions, please call the Health Room at 703-248-5530.

GMHS Physical Education Locker Room Hygiene Provided by GMHS Physical Education Staff

PARENTS

Health experts say the best way to prevent MRSA and other staphylococcus (staph) infections at home and school is to practice good personal hygiene consistently. In an effort to support good hygiene within our Physical Education (PE) facilities and locker rooms, our PE instructors will inspect locker rooms at the conclusion of PE classes and at the end of the regular school day to ensure all personal belongings have been removed. This practice will enable our custodial staff to thoroughly clean the PE facilities unhindered. Items of value (purses, cell phones, iPods, etc.) will be securely stored by the PE staff until those items can be reclaimed. Shoes and clothing left behind will be discarded to minimize potential health risks. Your assistance in reminding our students to check for their personal belongings prior to leaving PE class will be appreciated.

STUDENTS

PLEASE PICK UP **ALL OF YOUR PERSONAL ITEMS** SO THAT WE DON'T HAVE TO DISCARD ANY OF THEM. LOOK AROUND FOR ALL OF YOUR BELONGINGS, AND THEN **LOOK AROUND AGAIN!** THANK YOU!!!!

1st Semester Exam Information

On Monday, January 23, students will begin taking their **semester exams**. Semester exams will count **20% of the final semester grade**. (Each of the two quarter grades constitutes 40% of the semester grade.) It is very important that your students be well rested and prepared for these exams.

Please note the following about exams week:

Monday, January 23, is the first of four exam-only days. No classes are held. As in the past, on these days (Monday-Thursday) **students are only required to be in attendance for the exam sessions: 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.** Upon completion of the exam schedule, students will be dismissed. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, dismissal is at 12:30. On **Thursday, only the first exam session is scheduled. Dismissal is at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday with final bus departure at 10:10.**

During the exam schedule, students who have two exam periods during the day (with the exception of 8th graders) will be permitted to leave campus during the break time between exam periods and return to campus after the break. **Eighth graders are not allowed off campus.** All school conduct rules apply during the period of time off campus. Students who only have one exam period are expected to be on campus only for that exam period.

Students in the ACC program should continue to attend ACC as they are able. Afternoon students should attend daily during the exam week. Morning students should attend on Monday and Tuesday when the exams scheduled are for the morning blocks. If morning students do not have a scheduled class for Wednesday (Blk 5) or Thursday (Blk 6) they are expected to attend ACC. ACC students should only be absent from ACC if they have an exam scheduled in conflict with their class.

On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday the Mustang Café will be open for students between exams (10:05-10:25 a.m.) The usual nutrition break fare will be available for purchase.

Make-up sessions for students with **EXCUSED ABSENCES ONLY** must be individually arranged with the teacher during the unscheduled afternoons of Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday or during the 10:30 session on Thursday.

Upon completion of examinations on Thursday, January 26, the students have a three-day weekend as the school staff will be involved in professional activities on Friday, January 27.

Buses will be running on a modified and reduced schedule following exams. On Monday through Wednesday, January 23-25 buses will depart from GM at 12:37 p.m. On Thursday, January 26 buses will depart at 10:10 after the last exam.

Should a snow day occur before the exam days begin, there will be no changes to the exam order. Should a snow day cause a cancellation during the week of exams, the exams will be shifted forward to the next school day.

Regardless of snow cancellation, the second semester begins with an “odd day” on Monday, January 30.

1st Semester Exam Schedule January, 2012

Monday <u>Jan. 23</u>	Tuesday <u>Jan. 24</u>	Wednesday <u>Jan. 25</u>	Thursday <u>Jan. 26</u>
BLOCK 1 EXAM 8:00 – 10:00	BLOCK 2 EXAM 8:00 – 10:00	BLOCK 5 EXAM 8:00 – 10:00	BLOCK 6 EXAM 8:00 – 10:00
BLOCK 3 EXAM 10:30 – 12:30	BLOCK 4 EXAM 10:30 – 12:30	BLOCK 7 EXAM 10:30 – 12:30	HS released (10:00) Make-up session for <u>excused</u> absences
HS released (12:30) Make-up session for <u>excused</u> absences.	HS released (12:30) Make-up session for <u>excused</u> absences	HS released (12:30) Make-up session for <u>excused</u> absences	

First day of new semester (January 30) will be an ODD day