



DIAMOND MINE

Diamond Elementary School

DECEMBER 2025

Dear Diamond Parents,

The winter and holiday season is upon us! We hope everyone enjoyed a wonderful, relaxing Thanksgiving with family and friends. We had a busy month of November with a variety of school events. Parents and teachers met to discuss their child's progress during the Parent/Teacher conferences. Please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher if you have any questions or concerns.

On behalf of the Diamond Elementary staff, I would like to wish you and your family a happy holiday season and a safe, relaxing winter break. Each year you graciously entrust your most precious gifts with us— your children. Our staff continues to work hard in providing each and every child with rigorous learning experiences. As we all look forward to the holiday season and winter break with family and friends, we have an opportunities to celebrate on all the great things we have accomplished during the past year. We also have an opportunity to reflect and appreciate all that goes into making our school and community a great place for our children.

Gifts to staff are not expected nor solicited, however we recognize and appreciate that some parents have inquired about finding ways to celebrate our staff for their dedication and hard work. Occasionally, staff members will receive gifts from parents during the holiday season/at the end of the year, or for special occasions such as a wedding shower, a baby shower, etc. Please be aware of the MCPS ethics policy regarding gifts as you consider your recognition over the holidays and beyond. The MCPS Ethics Policy states that staff may not accept gifts from parents/families exceeding \$20 in value or a series of gifts exceeding \$100 in value in a calendar year from any person or family. If parents/families decide to contribute to a class gift for the staff member, it must follow the MCPS policy where each parent/family contribution to the gift cannot exceed \$20 in value. For example, if 15 families contribute \$10 each to make the class gift value of \$150 or 10 families contribute \$20 each to make the class gift value \$200, then this will be in accordance with the MCPS gift policy.

Once again, have a happy holiday, and joyous winter break with your family and friends. If you have any questions, please contact the school office at 240-740-2120.

Sincerely,

Daniel Walder
Principal

DECEMBER CALENDAR

Wednesday, December 10

Picture Re-Take for Students and Staff.

Wednesday, December 17

No School for PEP classes– Professional Learning

Thursday, December 18

4th & 5th Grade Field Trip - OQHS Music Spectacular

Friday, December 19

2nd Marking Period Interim Reports Distributed on Parent Vue.

Wednesday, December 24-

Friday, January 2

Winter Break– No School

Monday, January 5

Students, Teachers, and staff return to school

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REMINDERS:

Retake Picture Day is Wednesday, December 10th: *Who does Retake Picture Day involve?* Students who were absent or new to the school since the picture day will get their picture taken for school yearbook. If your student is getting a retake, they must return their original package to the photographer on Wednesday, December 10th. If a parent has expressed interest in having their child's picture retaken, this can also be done on retake day. The student should bring the original photo package, including original envelope and all picture products, to turn into the photographer when they come to sit for a new picture. They do not need to fill out a new order form. If you want your child to re-take the picture on Wednesday, December 10th, please complete the Sign-Up Form below. **Student Picture Re-Take Day Sign-Up Form:** <https://forms.gle/nmvh47YFa2XBbB9AA>. Parents can fill out the pdf form (attached document) and send it in or they can wait for the proofs to come back and will have a chance to order online at that time. We are committed to your student's safety!

Questions? Contact Classic Photography directly. (800)869-9515 x112

MCPS Staff Gift Policy: MCPS Staff Ethics Policy related to accepting gifts: Gifts to staff are not expected nor solicited, however we recognize and appreciate that some parents have inquired about finding ways to celebrate our staff for their dedication and hard work. Occasionally, staff members will receive gifts from parents during the holiday season, at the end of the year, or for special occasions such as a wedding shower, a baby shower, etc. Please be aware of the MCPS ethics policy regarding gifts as you consider your recognition over the holidays and beyond. As a friendly reminder (or possibly new information for those new to the Montgomery County Public School System), the MCPS Ethics Policy states that staff may not accept gifts from parents/families exceeding \$20 in value or a series of gifts exceeding \$100 in value in a calendar year from any person or family. If parents/families decide to contribute to a class gift for the staff member, it must follow the MCPS policy and each parent/family contribution to the gift cannot exceed \$20 in value. For example, if 15 families contribute \$10 each to make the class gift value of \$150 or 10 families contribute \$20 each to make the class gift value \$200, then this will be in accordance with the MCPS gift policy.

Appropriate Dress For Winter Weather: As we enter the winter season, it is important that our children come dressed appropriately to school based on the weather. During recess, we plan to get children outside as much as possible, weather permitting, as long as the temperature is 28 degrees or higher, including wind chill, and the ground is not too wet/slippery. With outdoor recess, children should wear winter coats, hats, gloves, etc. Students should dress in layers.

Recognizing Teachers and Other Staff Members: If your student has teachers or other staff members who are especially meaningful to them, this season of the year is a perfect time for you to send an e-mail to the teacher/staff member praising his/her work. In casual conversations, many of you speak to a school administrator about teachers or staff members who you and your student think are outstanding, but staff members do not often hear those words of praise directly. If you choose to do so, you may send a copy to Mr. Walder via email at Daniel_walder@mcpsmd.org and he will print it out for the staff member's file.

Safety Update and Tips: One of our commitments to the school community is to provide a safe and secure environment for all students, staff members, and families. As we have many students who walk to and from school each day, we encourage students to walk in groups. In addition, our bus drivers want to make sure our kindergarten students have someone who will meet them at the bus stop or that they have an older student to walk them home. In addition, develop and discuss an emergency plan with your children for what they should do on early dismissal days (whether it is scheduled or due to inclement weather, no heat, no power) or if they are dropped off at home and no adult is there.

Sledding Safety: Sledding can be a fun way to spend a snowy day this winter. It can also be dangerous if precaution is not taken. Stay safe sledding this winter with these tips. Please discuss these tips with your children: Don't go sledding alone. Use the buddy system or go with an adult.

- Never sled down a hill headfirst.
- Sit upright and face forward to avoid a head injury.
- Make sure the hill is safe and does not include a street, pond, trees or other dangerous obstacles.

For more information on emergency preparedness visit www.montgomerycountymd.gov/oemhs or if you do not have access to a computer, contact 311 or 240-777-0311.

Request for Language Assistance Translation: If parents need oral interpretation services or sign language interpretation for school meetings, parent-teacher conferences, school events, etc., please notify your child's teacher or contact the main office. Oral interpretation requests need to be made at least two weeks in advance of the school meeting or event to ensure interpreter availability.

Visitors: All visitors must enter the building through the main entrance, stop at the main office to sign in, and wear a visitor's badge while in the school. For the safety and security of all individuals, we need to be aware of the presence and location of all visitors in the building. Any individuals without a visitor's badge will be asked to report to the main office. Please help us keep all students in our school safe by following this important procedure! We ask for your support in maximizing the instructional time for students.

Health Office Update: We want to keep the students and the school operating on a normal schedule and minimize any disruption to teaching and learning. You can help us in our efforts to prevent the spread of flu by:

- Knowing the symptoms of the flu. These include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or greater), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and feeling very tired.
- Keeping children home from school if they are sick. Individuals who have been sick with the flu should stay home until they have been fever-free for 24 hours. Any children or staff who are sick at school will be sent home.
- Reminding your children to wash their hands often with soap and water.
- Encouraging your children not to share personal items like drinks, food, or utensils.
- Telling your children to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues. If they don't have a tissue, they should cough or sneeze into their upper sleeve, not their hands.

For more information, visit the MCPS website at www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org, the Montgomery County government website at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/h1n1flu or call the County flu hotline at 240-777-4200. In addition, you can visit the DES Health page at [Health Room Information](#) or contact the DES school health technician, Mrs. Sandy Honour, or our school nurse, Ms. Selamawit Yeneneh at 240-740-2122.

Diamond Elementary Arts Program

Grade Level December Newsletter

What is going on in Music class during December?

Kindergarten students will be working on the steady beat, long/short sounds, same/different, vocal and instrumental tone color, vocal range/exploration, and movement to music.

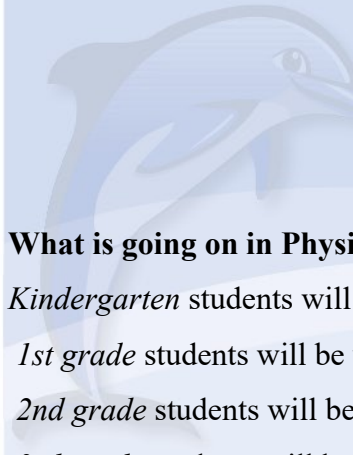
1st grade students will be working on identifying high/low, and long/short sounds in music. Students will imitate rhythmic and tonal patterns, and maintain the steady beat through movement and on instruments. Students will identify classroom instruments and instrument families. Students will also identify the number of sounds on a beat.

2nd grade students will be working on playing a bordun with proper technique on barred instruments, identify strong vs. weak beat and simple vs. compound meter; reading the pentatonic scale, singing with proper posture and breath support; developing criteria for classroom performances and audience behaviors.

3rd grade students will be working on singing within an octave range, in two part rounds and with correct posture and breath support. Students will sing songs of varied repertoire and read music using the pentatonic scale with pitches of low so and low la, while identifying music symbols for pitches G, A and B, the staff, bar lines and the treble clef.

4th grade students will be working on singing with expression, in three and four part rounds. Students will identify repeating and contrasting phrases along with various musical symbols. Students will sight read rhythms and pitches using solfege and given syllables. Students will perform singing games, songs and dances from various cultures.

5th grade students will be working on singing with appropriate technique while identifying various musical symbols. Students will perform music of world cultures, including songs and dances from various periods and cultures. Students will sing partner songs and descants with clear diction and expression.



Diamond Elementary Arts Program

Grade Level December Newsletter

What is going on in Physical Education class during December?

Kindergarten students will be working on self-tossing and catching.

1st grade students will be working on the underhand throw and catching.

2nd grade students will be working on the overhand throw and catching.

3rd grade students will be working on throwing and catching at different levels.

4th grade students will be working on throwing and catching to a partner moving across their face.

5th grade students will be working on throwing and catching to a partner moving away from them.

What is going on in Art class during December?

In Kindergarten students will be drawing and painting Scandinavian inspired trees.

1st grade students will be creating and glazing clay pinch pot monsters.

2nd grade students will be collaging a quilt design and reflecting on the process.

3rd grade students will be will be weaving using yarn and a loom.

4th grade students will be glazing and reflecting on making clay coil pots.

5th grade students will be designing and adding color to their one point perspective drawings.

What is going on in Counseling lessons during December?

In Kindergarten, 1st Grade and 2nd Grade, students will be starting a special unit called *Valuing Each Other*. In this unit, students learn to value others by appreciating their contributions and taking their perspectives. Students develop empathy, build relationship skills, and stand up for themselves and others when they see unfair behaviors, creating a welcoming and supportive classroom. Important ideas from each lesson include:

- Appreciating our differences;
- Including Everyone;
- Breaking Stereotypes;
- Showing Empathy and Supporting others;
- Standing up for others;

In 3rd and 4th grade, students continue learning about conflict resolution. We learned how to take the temperature of a problem. Determining the temperature helps students choose an appropriate response to solving the problem.

In 5th grade, students learned about goal setting. As a class we set a goal to complete a task together. Students then set their own academic and personal goals.

MCPS Staff Awards Nomination Process

Each year MCPS acknowledges several staff members with staff awards including support staff, teachers, and administrators. MCPS is beginning the nomination process for this school year, 2025-2026. We have had several staff members nominated for these awards over the years and three staff members who have won the awards. We have great things going on in our building and this is a great way to recognize our wonderful staff members for their dedication and commitment to teaching and learning. Below is some information about the staff awards, and links in this email are detailed directions on how to complete the teacher awards nomination process. Any staff member (a teacher, supporting staff member, an administrator) or parent can make a staff nomination for one of the awards. If you would like to nominate a Diamond ES staff member for one of the awards listed below, please follow the nomination process.

Supporting Services Employee of the Year: Nominations are expected to honor a supporting services employee who extends himself or herself beyond basic required duties and contributes to students and the school community by enhancing student learning, creating positive relationships, and making school or the office a better place. Nominees must be active support professionals with a minimum of three years of service with MCPS. Administrators, teachers, other support professionals, students and community members can nominate. **Deadline:** December 10, 2025 (by midnight). <https://www.seiu500.org/mcps-employee-of-the-year>

Montgomery County Teacher of The Year Award: The Montgomery County Teacher of the Year Award honors a full-time kindergarten through Grade 12 teacher who has a demonstrated record of high academic expectations for all students, engaging students of all backgrounds and abilities, contributing to a positive school culture, and connecting with the school community. The Montgomery County Teacher of the Year goes on to represent Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) as the MCPS nominee for the Maryland State Teacher of the Year award. <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/personnel/awards/teacher-of-year.aspx> All nomination packet requirements must be received **by midnight, December 23, 2025.**

The Washington Post Teacher of the Year Award (formerly Agnes Meyer Outstanding Teacher Award): The Washington Post Teacher of the Year Award recognizes a full-time teacher in prekindergarten through Grade 12 who instills in students a desire to learn and achieve. Each nominee must have a minimum of five years teaching experience, three of which must be in MCPS. This teacher also must understand the individual needs of students, encourage their talents, and foster their self-esteem. He or she demonstrates a thorough knowledge of the subject matter and possesses the ability to share it effectively with students. The nominee fosters cooperative relationships with his/her colleagues and the community and demonstrates outstanding leadership qualities. **All nomination packet requirements must be received by midnight, December 12, 2025.** To review the application process for this award, click on the link: <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/personnel/awards/Washington-Post-Teacher-of-the-Year-Award/>

The Shirley J Lowrie “Thank You For Teaching” Award: The Shirley J Lowrie “Thank You For Teaching” Award honors extraordinary elementary school teachers who have a deep dedication to the teaching profession. These elementary school teachers, prekindergarten through Grade 5, must work directly with students in the classroom on a daily basis, demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the subject matter, and effectively communicate that subject matter to students. The nominee should be a teacher who goes the extra mile to ensure that students receive the support they need to succeed. To review the application process for this award, click on the link: <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/personnel/awards/award-shirley-lowrie.aspx> **All nomination packet requirements must be received by midnight, December 12, 2025.**

The Washington Post Principal of the Year Award: This award recognizes principals who go beyond the day-to-day demands of their position to create an exceptional educational environment. In presenting these awards, *The Washington Post* Company Educational Foundation hopes to encourage excellence in school leadership and contribute in a substantive way to the improvement of education in the Washington metropolitan area. Nominations may be submitted by teachers, students, former students, parents, administrators or the general public. **All nomination packet materials must be submitted by midnight, December 12, 2025.** <https://www2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/personnel/awards/washingtonpostaward/>

The Superintendent’s Annual Mark Mann Excellence and Harmony Award: Established in 1991, this award honors MCPS principals who excel in promoting academic excellence, positive human relations and community outreach. These qualities were exemplified by Mark Mann, a former principal of Parkland Junior High School, who died in 1988. Nominations made in previous years may be resubmitted. <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/personnel/awards/mannaward/> **The deadline for submission is midnight, December 12, 2025.**

All awards are listed on the MCPS Awards webpage: <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/personnel/awards/> to nominate a deserving support professional, teacher or principal.

George B Thomas Learning Academy Saturday School

The George B. Thomas Sr. Learning Academy serves over 3,000 students annually, and works in tandem with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). With Saturday School as our primary program, our focus is to support MCPS cluster schools- elementary, middle and high schools- in key areas where our work will have the greatest impact.

Online registration has already started and we have adequate space for additional students.

Register for Kindergarten Saturday School: <https://saturdayschoolgbtla.wufoo.com/forms/ksfjxx11gk3iia/>

Register for Grades 1-12 Saturday School: <https://saturdayschoolgbtla.wufoo.com/forms/k1u0tv1719ebk73/>

Register for Decoding and Robotics: <https://saturdayschoolgbtla.wufoo.com/forms/kq4su600xh20p2/>

The nearest Saturday School program location to Diamond Elementary School is Northwest High School and Gaithersburg High School.

Outside of our traditional programs, we also offer coding for elementary and middle school students. We have robotics classes for middle school students, SAT prep courses and a crash course to college course as well.

Our program fees are \$40 for FARMS students and \$85 for all other students. These fees cover the ENTIRE year of tutoring. Coding is an additional fee at \$150 for five classes. Weekly attendance is *strongly encouraged* as students that attend regularly outperform students that do not.

Here is a link to the George B Thomas Saturday School program which can be found at www.saturdayschool.org.

SPANISH

La Academia de Aprendizaje George B. Thomas Sr. atiende a más de 3000 estudiantes anualmente y trabaja en conjunto con las Escuelas Públicas del Condado de Montgomery (MCPS). Con la Escuela de los Sábados como nuestro programa principal, nuestro enfoque es apoyar las escuelas del grupo de MCPS (escuelas primarias, inter-medias y secundarias) en áreas clave donde nuestro trabajo tendrá el mayor impacto.

La inscripción en línea ya comenzó y tenemos espacio adecuado para estudiantes adicionales.

Regístrese para la escuela de sábado de jardín de infantes: <https://saturdayschoolgbtla.wufoo.com/forms/ksfjxx11gk3iia/>

Regístrese para la escuela sabatina de grados 1 a 12: <https://saturdayschoolgbtla.wufoo.com/forms/k1u0tv1719ebk73/>

Regístrese para Decodificación y Robótica: <https://saturdayschoolgbtla.wufoo.com/forms/kq4su600xh20p2/>

La ubicación del programa de escuela sabatina más cercana a la escuela primaria Diamond es la escuela secundaria Northwest y la escuela secundaria Gaithersburg.

Fuera de nuestros programas tradicionales, también ofrecemos codificación para estudiantes de primaria y secundaria. Tenemos clases de robótica para estudiantes de secundaria, cursos de preparación para el SAT y también un curso intensivo para la universidad.

Las tarifas de nuestro programa son de \$40 para los estudiantes de FARMS y de \$85 para todos los demás estudiantes. Estas tarifas cubren TODO el año de tutoría. La codificación tiene una tarifa adicional de \$150 por cinco clases. La asistencia semanal es *fuertemente recomendado* ya que los estudiantes que asisten regularmente superan a los que no lo hacen.

Aquí hay un enlace al programa de escuela sabatina de George B Thomas que se puede encontrar en www.saturdayschool.org.