

# Welcome Back to School!

September 2016

Welcome to the 2016-2017 school year at Southwest Detroit Community School. This year we have a new name and a new logo, but many other things have stayed the same. Most of our staff from last year have returned, as well as most of our students and families. Thank you for continuing to believe in our school community!



For those of you who do not know me, let me share a little about myself. I have taught in Detroit for 14 years in both the traditional public school system as well as public school academies. The bulk of my classroom experience is in Kindergarten and 1st grade. I was a founding teacher at Lighthouse in 2013, teaching 4th grade in years 1 and 2 of Lighthouse's operation. Last year I was not at Lighthouse, but was instead the primary caregiver for my daughters, Adele and Ruby, while my wife went back to work full-time. I am excited and humbled to serve in this new role as principal. I look forward to continuing relationships with the many of you I already know, and to developing new relationships with those of you I am just now meeting.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions, concerns, or observations. Or just to introduce yourself.

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## Vision and Mission

SWDCS staff returned to work on August 22nd to begin planning and preparing for the new school year. One of the first things we did was to come together and craft a vision and mission statement to drive our work. You will see them referenced throughout our building - in classrooms and offices - and will even hear your children talking about parts of them.

### *Our Vision*

We are a joyful, inclusive family of learners who embrace education as a lifelong journey. As self-determined and productive people, we nurture our whole selves physically, mentally, emotionally, and artistically. We work in solidarity and love with our greater Southwest Detroit community. By critically and creatively participating in our world, we affect positive change and empower ourselves and each other to become the people we want to be. We are limitless!

### *Our Mission*

We embrace each other, we educate each other, and we empower each other in order to create a more just world.

### New Staff

While many faces are the same at SWDCS, we do have several new staff members I would like to introduce: Amanda Brunette (1st Grade), Jennifer Bahns (6th Grade/ Math), Shelby Liebler (7th Grade/ English & Health), Stephanie Namballa (Special Education), Conall Walsh (ESL Paraprofessional), Colette Lackey (Instructional Coach, K-4), and Kammy Webb (Instructional Coach, 5-8).

### Arrival and Teacher Appointments

The school building opens for students at 8:00am. There are no staff members available to supervise children before 8:00am.

If you need to see your child's teacher please schedule a meeting with them through the school office, through email, or via text. Teachers are happy to meet with you before school hours, during their planning period, or after school. Unfortunately, informal meetings -- even during arrival -- take the teacher's attention away from the rest of the students in their class and are unfair to all students.

### Dismissal

Each day last week our dismissal time decreased by about 5 minutes. In the past we have been able to complete dismissal in about 15 minutes -- pretty amazing when you think about the fact that we are able to safely exit almost 500 people via bus, car, and on foot in just 15 minutes! That is our goal again this year.

A note and map were sent home last week detailing changes to the dismissal procedure this year. Please look for further updates as we refine our process, and feel free to share feedback about how we can continue to improve the process.

### Late Pick-Up

Please do everything you can to pick up your students on time. If something comes up, please contact the office as soon as possible. There are no staff members assigned to supervise children after 3:45pm and special arrangements will need to be made.

Also be aware that any changes in planned pick-up or bus riding need to be communicated to the office by 2:00pm so that teachers can be informed and there is no confusion about where a student should go after school.

## Attendance

I am reminded of the old saying, 'half the battle is showing up.' Students cannot learn if they are not present. Being in school every day on time is essential to students' success. Moreover, students being in school every day on time is essential to all students' success. Student absences slow down the overall instruction in the classroom, and when students arrive late or leave early from school it disrupts the learning of the entire room.

Breakfast is served from 8:00am until 8:25am everyday. Instruction begins at 8:30am. Students entering the building after 8:35 need to be signed in by an adult and will be marked tardy. Excessive tardies will count as absences. Similarly, all early dismissals are recorded and count in the same way as tardy arrivals. Please call and provide written documentation for all absences, tardy arrival, and early dismissals.

If you need greater clarity on these procedures, please refer to the Student Handbook. Further questions can be directed to the school office.

## Uniforms

The purpose of our school uniform policy is to help students take pride in their personal appearance and to convey the seriousness and importance of their work. In much the same way that we expect the adults in our building to be dressed in appropriate business attire, we expect students to be in uniform every day. Our attire is an outward expression of our inner beliefs and attitudes.

As we move into the second week of school, we will increase our monitoring of the school's dress code policy. If some of your child's attire does not conform to the uniform policy you can expect a call from your child's teacher this week. Hopefully we can work with you to resolve any issues.

Please refer to the Student Handbook for more information about the uniform policy. Also, just as important as the actual clothing is how it is worn: shirts should be tucked in at all times and shoes should remain tied throughout the day.

## Forms Coming Home

There are several forms attached to this newsletter. It is *extremely* important that they are returned as soon as possible. All classrooms that have 100% of both the GVSU Media Release and Determination of Eligibility forms returned by this **Monday, September 19th** will have an ice cream treat at the end of the day.

## Lunch Volunteers

Parents are welcome to volunteer in many capacities at our school. One of the areas where we often need extra hand is in the lunchroom. If you would like to come in between 11:00am and 12:20pm to help distribute lunches, monitor students, and assist with clean-up please contact Ms. Gonzalez.

## Enrollment

We still have open spots in a few grade levels (K, 1st, 5th, 6th, and 7th). If you know any relatives, friends, or neighbors who are looking to be part of an amazing school community -- please refer them to the office!

## Parent Teacher Conferences

Mark your calendars: SWDCS' first PTC of the year will take place on Wednesday, October 19th. There will be no school for students and conferences will be scheduled throughout the day. All families should plan on attending as a lot of important information about the school year will be reviewed. Sign up information will come home in early October.

## Logo

Hopefully you have noticed SWDCS' new school logo. It is way cool and was designed by our very own Erin Ellis. Thank you Erin! While we will not be requiring students to wear clothing with the logo on it, many people have already asked if there is a way for them to purchase items with the logo. We are working on that and will update you soon!