

Hello Panther Families,

My name is Bill Johnston, Principal at Gunning Bedford Middle School, & I'm excited to work with you and your family this school year. It is going to be a great year! This is my 18th year in the Colonial School District. I have been a teacher at William Penn High School and an administrator across all of our secondary schools in Colonial during my career. I started at Gunning Bedford in 2022 and can't wait to begin the school year together. [Linked here is a picture of my family and I \(wife Lauren, daughter Nora, & son Luke\)](#). Each week this school year, I will share an update to families the day before we return to school each week (That will usually be Sunday's). The email/text will go out around 5PM each time. Please review the information each week from the update with your student. Below is a Summer update to Panther Families:

### **Upcoming Dates/Events:**

#### **Summer Grade Level Presentations:**

Families with students are encouraged to attend to meet grade level administrators, view presentations and see parts of the building.

- 6th grade presentation: Monday 8/4: Option 1: 8:00AM-9:00 AM, Option 2: 5:30-6:30PM (families are encouraged to attend one of the options) in the auditorium.
- 7th & 8th grade presentation: Monday 8/11, 5:30-6:30PM starting in the auditorium.

#### **Walkthrough Night: Thursday 8/21, 4:30PM-6:30PM:**

Families with students are encouraged to attend this evening at our school to see the building, ask questions of our administrative staff, & walk the hallways of the school. Homeroom locations for students will be available but teachers will not be present.

#### **Start of School:**

- Monday 8/25 is the first day of school for **6th grade students ONLY. 7th and 8th grade students do not attend until Tuesday 8/26.**
- Tuesday 8/26, all students will attend, it will be the first day for 7th & 8th grade students.

#### **District Calendar, August/September Important Dates:**

- [District calendar for 2025-2026 linked here:](#)
- No School on Friday 8/29 & Monday 9/1 for Labor Day Weekend Observance
- Open House Thursday 9/18 in the evening
- No School on Friday 9/19 for Staff Professional Development
- Family connections meetings: Family Connections is our family & staff collaboration team. The group collaborates on fundraisers & events at Gunning Bedford. All are welcome! Our first meeting will be on Thursday September 25th, 5:30PM-6:30PM in the Library.

### **New Updates**

**School Supplies:** We are often asked about school supply lists for the upcoming school year. In Colonial, one of our core commitments is to ensure that every student has access to the basic educational tools they need to succeed. For this reason, any supply lists shared with families are completely optional. That

said, we are incredibly grateful for the continued generosity of our families, community partners, and supporters who always look for ways to help our students. If you would like to provide your child with additional supplies this year, items such as pencils or pens, notebooks, and folders are always useful and appreciated. In addition, we encourage families to have some basic supplies available at home to support learning outside of the classroom—especially during homework time. Helpful items for middle school students to have at home may include: Pencils, pens, and highlighters, Loose-leaf paper or notebooks, Folders or binders to keep materials organized, Index cards for studying, A ruler, calculator, and scissors, Glue sticks or tape, Post-it notes or sticky tabs, & a quiet space for focused work. Thank you for your ongoing support and partnership as we prepare for a great school year ahead!

**Summer Math Club Meeting:** During the school year, we have an after school Math club. In preparation for the upcoming school year, one of our teachers and Math Club coordinates, Ms. Hayden, will be hosting live Zoom sessions for students/families to learn about Math Club. Students/families can join any of the sessions they like below using the Zoom Meeting details here:

-Dates: Tuesday: 7/22, 7/29 & 8/5. Wednesday: 7/23, 7/30 & 8/6. Thursday: 7/24, 7/31, & 8/7

-Time: 9:00AM-11:00AM-Link: <https://app.zoom.us/jc/join> -Meeting ID: 993 3311 1741 -Passcode:

Hayden 2025 If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Hayden here:

[Lozetta.Hayden@colonial.k12.de.us](mailto:Lozetta.Hayden@colonial.k12.de.us)

**Fall Sports:** Our Fall sports are co-ed Soccer and girls field hockey. Our after school activities will begin in early September. Our athletics website is linked here with a message from our athletic director, Mr. Brelick. <https://www.panthers-sports.com/>

**Cell Phone Expectations:**  **GB 2025 Cellphone Use Expectations**

As we prepare for a successful new school year, we want to communicate an important aspect of our school environment that we believe significantly benefits your child's learning and well-being: our continued commitment to a cell phone use free learning environment. Students are permitted to bring cell phones to school. However, they are not permitted to use them or have them out during the school day, from arrival to dismissal. This includes classrooms, hallways and the cafeteria. We understand that in today's digital world, this policy may require an adjustment for some, but we firmly believe it fosters a more focused, engaging, and enriching educational experience for all students. **Moreover, our expectation is that students are not to use cell phones while at school. Additionally, the wearing of headphones/earbuds that are not in use in classrooms for learning is to not occur while at school.**

**Panther PRIDE Definition:** Our school motto is, "You Can't Hide that Panther PRIDE". When we say PRIDE, we mean more than just being proud of being a student at Gunning Bedford. We want to highlight our values of Perseverance, Respect, Integrity, Discipline, & Excellence.

\*Perseverance - Try, Try, Try...Never Give Up.

\*Respect - Be kind to others and self in everything you say, do, and think.

\*Integrity - Do the right thing even when no one else is watching..

\*Discipline - Think it through before I do. I am in control of myself and my behavior.

\*Excellence - Do your best!

Have a great rest of the day and remember, you can't hide that Panther Pride!

Sincerely,

Bill Johnston, Principal, Gunning Bedford Middle School