

AES Panther Press

October 10, 2025

From the Principal's Press Box...

Dear AES Parents and Guardians,

As we approach National Bus Safety Week, we want to take a moment to emphasize the importance of keeping our children safe during their commutes to and from school. This year, National Bus Safety Week runs from October 20th to October 24th, and it's a perfect opportunity to remind our students about the rules and practices that ensure their safety while riding the bus.

Important key reminders for our students are to practice safe boarding and exiting procedures, the importance of staying seated especially when the bus is moving, and being respectful to the bus driver and fellow students riding the bus. We encourage you to discuss these safety tips with your child at home as well. The school bus is an extension of our school community and students need to be reminded from all of us about the importance of following expectations to keep them safe. Their safety is our top priority each and every day.

Today your child will be taking home an important contract regarding bus safety from myself and Ms. Tracy. In this contract, we emphasize the importance of bus safety when riding the bus and the expectations of being a bus rider. Riding the school bus to school everyday is a privilege and not a right. It is something that can be taken away if expectations are not followed by students.

Let's work together to make this a safe and enjoyable experience for all. Thank you for your continued support in keeping your children safe.

Warm Regards,

Ms. Malcotti, Principal
Ms. Tracy, Assistant Principal

IMPORTANT DATES

- **October 14:** Fall Individual Pictures
- **October 17:** Schools Closed
- **October 20:** Schools and Offices Closed
- **October 21-24:** PTA Book Fair
- **October 24:** PTA Trunk or Treat
- **October 30:** Fall Parties
- **October 31:** End of 1st Quarter
- **October 31:** 3 Hr Early Dismissal. No School for PS classes (Ms. Mollie and Ms. Shannon)
- **November 2:** Daylight Saving Time Ends
- **November 8:** Gr5 Pancake Breakfast

[2025-2026 related arts color day calendar](#)

Hot Off the Presses! (new content since the last Panther Press)

Important Dismissal Info re: RECC/PreK Playground Area

Parents/Guardians picking up students in Grades K-5 **must** avoid cutting through the RECC/PreK Playground area.

- This playground is the designated dismissal space for our 3- and 4-year-old students.
- For the safety of these young children (some of whom attempt to leave the area), it is critical that the space remains restricted and **GATES remain CLOSED** at all times.
- Signs have been placed on the gates for the RECC/PreK playground stating that the area is for RECC/PreK only. **Please adhere to the signs posted.**

Please walk around the gated area or use the other side of the building to reach the back of the school.

Thank you for helping us ensure a safe dismissal for all students.

From the Media Center

Please [click on this link](#) to view the Atholton Elementary PTA Book Club letter from the Media Center. Please complete your request by Friday, October 31, 2025.

School Picture Day on Tuesday, Oct. 14

Picture Day is on Tuesday, 10.14. Every student will have their picture taken for the yearbook.

- To prepay online using your credit card, please [use this link](#) and [the instructions at this link](#) before October 14th.
- Online orders will not be accepted after October 13th.
- You can also pay on picture day with cash or check using the forms sent home in the October 3rd Friday Folder.

Scholastic Book Fair

The PTA sponsored Scholastic Book Fair will be at AES from October 21 - October 24. Students will be able to preview the materials during the school day and have the opportunity to create a wish list. During the Fall Book Fair, students will not be able to purchase items during the school day. In addition to purchasing books online, families can shop between 4pm and 7pm on October 21 - October 23. Purchases can also be made during Trunk or Treat on October 24. To access the Book Fair, students must leave the building for dismissal and then come back into the building through the front entrance of the school with their families.

2024-2025 HCPSS Partnerships Snapshot

The [HCPSS Partnerships 2024–2025 Annual Snapshot](#) is now available. The snapshot includes a link to school system partners, including each school's partners, as well as system-wide, curricular, and program office partnerships. The Snapshot highlights the essential role our partners play in ensuring every student has the tools to succeed beyond graduation.

PreK Accreditation Update

This year, our Pre-K program will participate in the Accreditation Annual Updates process. We achieved Accreditation in the 23-24 school year.

Maryland Accreditation is...

- A way for programs to demonstrate their commitment to providing high-quality learning environments.
- A process for demonstrating and verifying program effectiveness and continuous improvement using the [Maryland Accreditation Standards](#).
- A process in which programs commit to and demonstrate continuous quality improvement to benefit children, families, and staff.

The Annual Updates process supports continuous quality improvement of high-quality learning and environments for your children.

As part of this process, we are continuing to look at the quality of our program through a self-appraisal process. Our Pre-K program has recently completed its self-appraisal using the [Maryland Accreditation Standards](#). As a result of our initial self-appraisal, we have developed a Program Improvement Plan that will address the following goals this school year:

- Develop increased opportunities for choral responding.
- Survey parents to assess family needs and hold a RECC family night to provide resources based on needs and build community amongst the RECC families.

We're excited to continue our journey of quality programming for all young children, their families, and staff. Please contact the Pre-K team with questions about Accreditation or our Accreditation Program Improvement Plan.

Worth Mentioning Again

Free Flu Clinics

Free flu clinics are available through the Howard County Health Department. Please [click here to view the flier](#) for dates and times of the free flu clinics.

From The Health Room:

Not sure if your child should stay home? See the diagram below for guidance.



Information from the Green School Team:

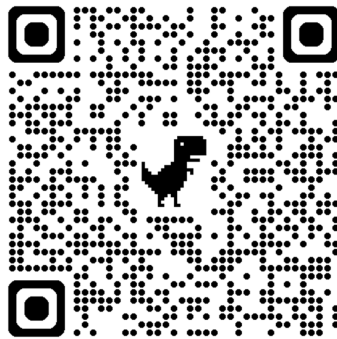
Atholton will continue our "Think Before You Throw Thursdays" this year. Our goal is to encourage our students and staff to use more reusable items throughout their day, so

we throw away less. We also invite students to wear something GREEN if they wish, every Thursday, to remind themselves to be GREEN! Our first "Think Before You Throw Thursday" for this school year will be on September 19.

HCPSS Volunteer Training SY25-26

Confidentiality Agreement for Conducting Classroom, Visits/Observations, and Volunteer/Chaperone Opportunities is now ONLINE!

Please complete the online training by reviewing the [training slides](#) on the HCPSS website. Afterwards, you do not have to print out anything; just fill out the [Google Form here](#), and this will count as your required documents. Or scan the QR code below:



Arrival and Dismissal and Buses at AES

Please review the Arrival and Dismissal Procedures for Atholton ES that can be found [here](#). It is important that everyone in the community follow these guidelines to ensure a safe start and end to our school days.

We wanted to highlight a couple of issues that came up today to clarify our procedures.

- During arrival, please follow the directions of staff members at the front of the building to ensure everyone's safety. Do not pass buses or other vehicles on Seneca Drive.
- During dismissal, no cars are allowed in the bus loop. All car riders are picked up behind the school. If your car is in the loop during dismissal, you will need to wait to leave until the buses have been dismissed. Backing out of the loop is not a safe alternative.
- We received calls from community members today about cars being parked illegally on others' property in a way that made it impossible for them to get out of their driveways. Please be respectful and park legally to avoid being ticketed or towed.

For our bus riders, we will have 9 buses providing transportation for AES this school year. Some of the buses have a 3-digit number, and all of our Zum buses have a 6-digit number. To make it easier for us to communicate with students and families about buses, we will be using numbers listed below. Please remember, if your child rides a Zum bus and you are looking for information on the Zum app, you will need to use the full 6-digit number. Information about how to download the Zum app can be found below.

Bus 453

Bus 870

Zum Bus 233004 = BUS 4

Zum Bus 233214 = BUS 214

Zum Bus 233221 = BUS 221

Zum Bus 233229 = BUS 229

Zum Bus 233246 = BUS 246

Zum Bus 234276 = BUS 276

Zum Bus 234281 = BUS 281

Thank you for your patience as we begin another great year!

Zum App

Using the app will allow you to track your child's bus in real-time, receive pick-up notifications if you choose, and view the driver for each ride.

To start using the Zum app, please follow these instructions:

1. [Download the app-](https://apps.apple.com/us/app/zum-student-transportation/id1076430968)
<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/zum-student-transportation/id1076430968>
2. Log in to your account with the phone number or email address you have listed on your child's record in [Family File in HCPSS Connect](#).
3. Verify your access by entering the one-time code sent to your device.
4. Check the notification settings to ensure you're receiving Zum notifications, if desired, so you'll know when the bus is approaching and when your child has arrived at school.

Learning Together Program

The Atholton Elementary Early Childhood Classes are ***still looking*** for peers for the 2025-2026 school year. We are accepting applications for general education students to participate as peers through the Learning Together Program (LTP). These classes include general education and special education students. The program's focus is helping all children develop communication, literacy, math, problem solving, motor, and social skills. Parents of children who will be 3 by September 1st, applications are now being accepted. Please contact the front office for more information.

In alignment with Maryland's Blueprint for the Future, new LTP applications for students turning 4 by **September 1 will not be available**. The Howard County Public School System continues to offer Prekindergarten for income eligible children who will be 4 years old by September 1. For additional information contact the school or visit: <https://www.hcpss.org/schools/pre-k-programs/>

AES Website and Calendar

Please bookmark the [Atholton ES Website](#) to keep up-to-date with the latest information! Also, the elementary related arts calendar is available to subscribe to. So you can keep track of RYOGB days! [Click here for HCPSS directions](#) on how to add a calendar.

FAMILY FILES - please update ASAP

[Español](#) | [中文](#) | [한국어](#)

HCPSS utilizes Family File for families to complete emergency information. Parents/guardians must verify and/or update information for each child each school year.

Please note that *some resources within HCPSS Connect Synergy are not yet available for the 2025-2026 school year*, including homerooms, teachers and schedules; and bus transportation assignments. Parents/guardians are only asked to complete Family File at this time.

Several updates have been made to Family File, including how and where to access. Parents/guardians can now [access and complete Family File](#) by logging in to HCPSS Connect Synergy, selecting the Online Registration at the top right of the page and then selecting Family File Verification.

Once logged in, parents/guardians will be asked to update or provide the following: family information; parent/guardian contact; emergency contact(s); and student information, including health information, PTA/PTSA directory inclusion, release of information, science agreement, and arrival/dismissal procedures.

New this year, Family File includes a Secondary Science Safety Agreement, a comprehensive Information Release section, and the ability to submit a change of address.

- **Change of Address:** Families who have recently moved will [submit necessary documentation](#) when completing Family File, rather than the previous process of completing in the school.
 - In the Family section, select the checkbox if your address has changed, and enter the updated address and the date of the deed/lease change.
 - After submitting your change of address, a staff member from your child's school will contact you to finalize details relating to your submission.

- **Science Safety Agreement:** Formerly a paper that middle and high school students brought home for parents/guardians to sign and return to school, this is now available in Family File. The [full agreement can be found online](#) and parents/guardians will acknowledge the agreement in the Family File Student Information section.
- **Information Release:** Permission options for the release of information have not changed, however for easier use, these now are found in one location. Releases include media (photo use), data confidentiality, and student creative work.

[Resources on completing Family File](#) may be found online. Answers to frequently asked questions on [Family File](#) and on [HCPSS Connect](#) are available on the HCPSS Help site.

Refrigerator Page

Please use the [Refrigerator Page Link](#) for information about lunch schedules, testing windows, musical performance dates, etc.

Free and Reduced Meals - check your eligibility today!

Students whose families do not qualify for free or reduced lunch will be required to pay the [daily meal price](#). Many HCPSS families are eligible to participate in the Free and Reduced Price Meals (FARMs) program, which provides children with a wide range of benefits, including free or discounted college tuition, testing and application fees, academic and athletic program fees, and many others, in addition to free or discounted meals. Families are urged to check their eligibility and complete a FARMs application as soon as possible. **Families must submit a new application every school year.** [Details on the Free and Reduced Meals program](#), including a link to apply, are available online.

Student Absences

All absence notes should be sent directly to aesabsence@hcpss.org. ([Click for the full attendance announcement](#))

In your absence email, please include the following:

- Student's full legal name
- Homeroom teacher
- Dates of absence
- Reason for absence (e.g., illness, bereavement, observance of a religious holiday, lack of transportation)

Birthday Celebrations

We know and appreciate that families want to recognize their children's birthdays and participate in other class celebrations. However, it is important to remember that [HCPSS Policy 9090: Wellness Through Nutrition and Physical Activity](#) does not allow for parents (or staff) to bring in food for these kinds of occasions. You may bring in something special for your own child, but any food items cannot be shared with other students. If you'd like to provide a goodie bag to the class, consider including items like pencils, fidgets, or other small, non-food items

When there are class celebrations throughout the year, the community will be notified of any food items that will be provided for students. These food items will be in alignment with HCPSS Policy 9090 and meet the required nutritional guidelines. If you would prefer that your child not have what is being offered, you may choose to send in an alternate item.

Also, please note that HCPSS provides a circular to all schools each year prohibiting the presence of latex balloons in school buildings. Any balloons used for decoration or celebration in the building must be latex-free.