

Cresskill Public Schools



News from the Superintendent's Desk September 2013

Welcome Back Parents,

I hope you had a fabulous summer enjoying family and friends as well as the additional week with your children. We are looking forward and are ready for them to begin the school year. We are honored and proud to serve your children. Our dedicated staff will continue to provide an outstanding educational experience. We hope that you, as parents, will continue to demonstrate your support by staying involved in your child's education. Together we can encourage our students to achieve their dreams.

Please review the important information below that outlines the programs, upgrades, new policy and other pertinent information for the 2013-2014 school year.

Receive Notification of Events and School Information

To receive communication, reminders, school closings, and other school information via email or phone please take a moment to notify your child's school office **only if either has changed.** Consistent with the District's confidentiality standards, your email address(es) will remain confidential. Thank you for helping us to keep you informed about the Cresskill Schools.

School Start and End Times

Regular School Day

Cresskill High School

Start Time: 7:40 a.m.
Lunch: 10:59 a.m. – 11:44 a.m.
End Time: 3:00 p.m.

Cresskill Middle School

Start Time: 8:18 a.m.
Lunch: 11:48 a.m. – 12:33 p.m.
End Time: 3:00 p.m.

Edward H. Bryan School

Start Time: 8:30 a.m.
Lunch: 11:20 a.m. – 12:55 p.m.
End Time: 3:10 p.m.
Step By Step 8:45 a.m. – 2:45 p.m.

Merritt Memorial School

Start Time: 8:30 a.m.
Lunch: 12:05 p.m. – 12:50 p.m.

End time: 3:10 p.m.
First Steps, AM 8:45 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.
First Steps, PM 12:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Early Dismissal

Cresskill Middle School/High School

Start Time: 7:40 a.m.
End Time: 11:50 a.m.

Edward H. Bryan/Merritt Memorial School

Start Time: 8:30 a.m.
End Time: 12:40 p.m.

Delayed Opening

Cresskill Middle School/High School

Start Time: 10:00 a.m.
End Time: 3:00 p.m.

Edward H. Bryan/Merritt Memorial School

Start Time: 10:30 a.m.
End Time: 3:10 p.m.

The Importance of Attendance

The Cresskill School District believes regular attendance plays a key role in student achievement. Studies have shown that chronic absenteeism affects academic performance. Students are required to attend school and classes on time each day. Beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, the New Jersey School Performance Report defines a chronically absent student as a student who is not present for 10% of the school year, **for any reason**. For example, the school year for a Cresskill student is 180 days. If that student misses 18 days, they are considered chronically absent.

While the new policy from the State Department is stringent, I believe that we do have some latitude. It is understandable if the child is absent due to illness, due to quarantine under the direction of a county or city health officer, for justifiable personal reasons including an appearance in court, observance of a holiday or ceremony of his or her religion. All other absences will be unexcused. To reduce the number of absences I encourage parents to reconsider vacations during the school year and medical appointments during school hours. In the 2013-2014 school year, letters will be periodically generated for absences and tardies. This communication will provide opportunities for parent and principal to discuss potential concerns about excessive absences throughout the year. In accordance with the State mandate, the Board of Education policy for Retention and Promotion has been changed to reflect the new guidelines that a child must attend 90% of the school days or 162 days. **Being present and on time each day not only supports academic growth but is also an important trait when they enter the workforce.**

Cresskill Education Foundation

Our Cresskill Education Foundation works hard each year to provide funding for valuable activities, materials, and services at each of our schools. Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of parents and community members, the Foundation donated more than \$250,000 over the past 5 years for school programs, resources, and technology. With this outstanding level of support, our schools were able to provide technology resources, Project Adventure, Robotics materials, music lab, enhancements to photography and broadcast studio, band uniforms, elementary spring musical, artist in residence programs, and environmental

programs for all students. You will receive your Annual Fund Drive contribution materials in September. I hope you will support the Foundation in funding our outstanding schools. Every student in the District benefits, and we hope that every family will help in whatever way they can to ensure that there are sufficient funds for these enhancements to our school programs. For more information on the Foundation or to make an on-line donation, log on to www.cresskillcef.org or contact the superintendents' office.

The first event sponsored by the Foundation is The Zerbini Family Circus on Sunday, September 22nd. Performances will be at 2:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. on the field that is bordered by Dogwood Lane and Margie Avenue (behind Merritt Memorial School.) Tickets for both adults and children are only \$10 in advance with the CEF receiving 50% of all advance sales. Tickets at the door will be \$12 for children and \$15 for adults with the CEF receiving only 10% of the ticket price. Accordingly, help us make the Circus a success and purchase your tickets in advance. Tickets are NOW available at Borough Hall, Hudson Drug, the Cresskill Senior Center and all the Cresskill school offices.

Traffic Safety

Please be extremely careful when driving around students. It's also important for drivers to be considerate of our residential neighbors when approaching, waiting, or parking around schools. Please drive carefully and take care not to block residential driveways, even when waiting in your vehicle. Also adhere to signs posted in front of the schools. Please be aware that the Police Department will ticket violators they observe on public streets and parking lots.

Additional Security Measures

Our focus is to keep our students and staff safe and secure in our school buildings. In that regard we have relocated and or upgraded the entrances to all buildings. The number of entrances and exits also will be limited. Our goal is to reduce the number of persons entering the building. There is a drop off for lunches, instruments, or other items at the entrance to each building. Only persons with an appointment will be allowed to enter. This is an opportunity for your child to become more responsible for what they need to bring to school. More specific information will be forthcoming from the principal of your child's school.

Facility Upgrades

Specifically, in the area of facilities, the maintenance crews in each building and outside contractors have been working diligently to prepare the classrooms and continue the task of updating and refurbishing the buildings. Listed below is a sampling of items completed.

- Relocating the main office at Merritt Memorial School
- Relocate the main entrance at Edward H. Bryan School
- Additional security at main entrances in all three buildings
- Continue with improvements to the courtyard
- Electronic sign
- Exterior painting at Edward H. Bryan School
- Painting various classrooms in all three buildings
- Replacing carpeting at the elementary schools

Technology

Again this year with the support of the HSA, PTA, CEF, and budget funds, we were able to purchase additional smartboards at the high school, laptops in all three buildings, Ipads for various classrooms, some desktops for teachers, and servers. We also added new programs to support instruction in the content areas (Discovery Streaming). A new public address system was also installed at the Merritt Memorial School.

Educational Enhancements

Many teachers have spent the summer preparing for the 2013-2014 school year. They attended in district workshops on common core and how it impacts our curriculum and instruction, how to use data to differentiate instruction, developing units of study in science and social studies that support all learners, and refining the cougar code and the middle school culture. At the high school new electives in the content areas will be offered such as, Introduction to engineering, Robotics II, Lies in History, Street Law, Art of Investing, Digital Cinematography, and psychological thrillers. Our new teachers also attended a 5 day workshop to support their first year in the district.

Our content area supervisors will continue to work with K-12 staff in order to provide a coordinated effort amongst all three schools. This structure is particularly helpful as we embark on the implementation of the common core standards and student growth objectives for all teachers.

District Goals for the 2013-2014 School Year

In the 2013-2014, district schools will focus on implementation of the science and social studies curriculum in the elementary schools, mathematics at grades 7 and 8, and the community service and internships at the high school.

Additional goals include a parent survey on school climate at the elementary schools and implementation of the new teacher and principal evaluation system.

Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Information

The Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying policy (HIB) will continue to be posted on the website under on the district home page. The law advises that we must assign a HIB coordinator and anti-bullying specialist in each building. Those names and contact information are also posted on the district website.

On behalf of the entire Board of Education, we look forward to a successful school year and continue to appreciate the support of our Cresskill community and our dedicated staff. Please visit our website for more information on what is happening in the Cresskill Schools, along with following us on Twitter. Our address is www.cboek12.org. If you have any questions, comments or concerns please feel free to contact me at lbellina@cboek12.org.

Thank you for your commitment to your child's education.

Dr. Loretta Bellina

Superintendent of Schools