



Hornet News

Building Our Legacy

Principal's Corner - Ms. Carolyn R. Jackson

Dear GMS Families,

Welcome to the 2023-24 school year! As the new principal of Gunston Middle School, it is my pleasure to welcome everyone back for another great year. We are excited to have students back in our classrooms and hallways, filling them with positive energy, enthusiasm, and a sense of belonging for learning in a culturally responsive environment. Our mission is to help every child feel welcomed, connected, and a part of our Gunston family. Additionally, we strive to challenge each student to grow in their academic abilities, social-emotional learning and to be college and career prepared. At Gunston, amazing teachers spend hours planning and creating classroom activities to engage all students. Our teachers will establish a welcoming and inclusive classroom environment that encourages active student participation and foster a sense of belonging.

The administrative team, counseling department, and custodial staff have been hard at work making sure everything is ready for the first day of school---August 28.

Inside the pages of this newsletter, you will find information needed to prepare for the school year. Additional information will be sent on the first school day, requiring immediate attention. Families can locate school supply lists on the Gunston website <https://gunston.apsva.us>. Also, follow us on the new Instagram page @gunstonms_aps

Gunston Middle School is a great place to learn. We emphasize a culture of warmth, high expectations, rigorous academics, and closing opportunity gaps. The staff is committed to our Hornets and helping them discover their interests, strengths, and needs.

We look forward to seeing you soon.

Inside this issue:

Note from Assistant Principals	2
Dean of Students	3
ITC, Facilities Manager & Activities Coordinator	4
Technology Corner	5
Important Dates, SEL & Academic Schedule	6
Director of Counseling & Students Services	7
Prohibited Items, Cellphones & Clinic	8
Meals, Front Office & Transportation	9
After School Activities, & PE Uniforms	10
Note from PTA	11

GMS Important Phone Numbers:

Main Office:
703.228.6900

Attendance:
703.228.6920

After School Activities:
703.228.6906

Registrar:
703-228.6909

Clinic:
703.228.6913

Check-In Program:
703.228-6936
Extended Day Central Office:
703.228.6069

Fax:
703.519.9183

Dr. Khethiwe Hudson,
Assistant Principal-8th Grade

Dear 8th Grade Families,

I hope you are enjoying your Summer break and that you are taking the needed time to relax before school starts. My name is Dr. Hudson. I am excited to be your 8th grade assistant principal this year. I want to welcome all of our new 8th graders to Gunston. I cannot wait to meet you. You are joining a dynamic and hard-working group of students and staff. I also want to welcome our returning 8th graders. It is an honor to be your assistant principal again this year. I remember starting this journey with you in 6th grade, and now you have grown, matured, and most importantly, you have worked hard to be where you are.

Please know that the whole Gunston team is here to support you on your journey this school year. My vision is maintaining high-expectation for all students, whether you are in the classroom, hallways, lunch, sports, clubs, and all other parts of the school. Another vision is for all students to feel welcome and safe here at Gunston. Finally, I want to leave you with these two quotes:

"It is in your hands, to make a better world for all who live in it."
"Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again."- Nelson Mandela

I am looking forward to seeing all of you at the end of August.

Dr. Hudson

Mr. Brannon Burnett,
Assistant Principals-7th Grade

Dear 7th Grade Families

Greetings! As the Assistant Principal in charge of 7th grade, I am excited to welcome you all to the new academic year. I am here to support our students, families, and staff in every way possible.

For our 7th-grade students, this year holds great promise and opportunity. Together, we will encourage their growth academically, socially, and emotionally. Our goal is to nurture a positive and motivating learning environment that empowers students to achieve their best.

To support your child's success, I have spent the summer reflecting on the previous year's successes and identifying areas for improvement. I will continue to seek additional resources to support our students as they navigate their middle school years.

As we return to school, I am eagerly looking forward to meeting new faces and hearing stories from the summer months. I believe in the power of community and the strength we gain from learning and growing together. Each year, we embark on an educational journey that encourages curiosity, fosters creativity, and embraces diversity.

I am genuinely excited about the school's opening and the boundless possibilities it brings. I am confident that by working hand in hand, we will make this school year an enriching and transformative experience for our students. Let us continue to foster a strong partnership between home and school to ensure our students flourish and thrive.

Together, let's make this a remarkable year for our 7th-grade students!

Mr. Burnett

Ms. Erika Sanchez
Assistant Principal-6th Grade

Hello 6th Families,

Hello Gunston Students, Families, and Community Members!

It is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that I write this letter of introduction to you as the new sixth-grade assistant principal of Gunston Middle School. My name is Erika Sanchez, and it is a privilege to join one of APS' most diverse and culturally rich middle schools in the county. All of us at Gunston Middle School are thrilled to begin what promises to be a great school year!

Doing what is best for students and assisting staff and families to achieve the best results together have always been my guiding principles. Through our collective efficacy approach, our students will advance their academic and social-emotional learning in a caring, safe, and healthy learning environment, responsive to every student, in collaboration with our families and the Gunston community.

As your sixth-grade assistant principal, it is essential that all individuals who enter our premises, including staff members, students, and parents, experience a sense of belonging and excitement about being part of our educational community. In tune with Principal Jackson and the Gunston administrative team, our priority is to provide a positive and engaging learning environment that is inclusive, engaging, and challenging for every student.

I look forward to learning more from this fantastic community and will remain committed to the team's collective work to support our student's academic and social success.

I hope you all enjoy the remaining summer days. See you soon!

Ms. Sanchez



Mr. Tyrone Stewart, Dean of Students

Hello Families and Young Scholars,

I hope you had a refreshing summer and made plenty of memories. The time has come for us to get back to business, here at Gunston Middle. My name is Mr. Stewart, and I will be your Dean of Students. I am excited to be a part of the Gunston family and I can't wait to meet you. For many of you this will be a new adventure. We are going to figure this out together. We are getting ready to kick off your first day then moving on to make this an amazing school year. You will receive more information regarding important things that you will need know. Scholars, I encourage you to explore the various clubs, activities and sports here at Gunston. It's a way to meet new friends and to challenge your comfort zone. I have high expectation for every student. My job is to make sure your school environment is safe. To develop and maintain positive school behavior as well as fostering positive relationship in our school community.

Enjoy the remaining of your summer break, and I will see you soon!

What is a Dean of Students?

- Focus on Student Attendance
- Implement Restorative Practices for Discipline Issues
- Work with Teachers on classroom management
- Oversee student behavioral management issues and help promote positive school behavior, including counseling and mentoring students
- Coordinate and/or conduct student suspensions and acts on student discipline referrals
- Provides re-entry (follow-up) communications with school counselors, parents, and social workers involving disciplinary and/or attendance issues.
- Develops intervention strategies and organization programs to ensure positive conduct, e.g., peer-mediation programs and restorative practices
- Assists teachers, school counselors, and parents in developing student expectations and individual student behavior contracts (verbal or written)
- Coordinate with the Campus Principal and Central Office staff on identifying alternative education programs as needed and assists with student transitions to and from the program.
- Foster effective interpersonal relations and develop positive relationships with staff, students, parents, and community.
- Work with school security staff and officers to move students to class on time; helps keep students in the classroom and ensures the overall safety and security of the school campus
- Helps manage the daily operations of the school campus including safety and security operational tasks, such as managing emergency drills, leading arrival/dismissal procedures, cafeteria duty, and attending evening activities, e.g., performance arts and athletic events.
- Works closely with the APS Office of Safety and Security to participate in advance level training related to school safety and turnkey relevant training to staff.



Ms. Rayla Parquet, Instructional Technology Coordinator

Hello Gunston Families

I hope this message finds you excited and ready to embark on a new school year! I am Ms. Parquet, the Instructional Technology Coach. I am thrilled to be a part of your educational journey and play a pivotal role in enhancing your learning experience through the use of technology. Let's make this academic year a remarkable one, filled with technological discovery and incredible learning experiences!

My primary mission is to support the Gunston School Community (students, families and teachers) in integrating technology effectively into the learning process. Technology is an incredible tool that can foster creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking, and my goal is to ensure that all stakeholders have the skills and knowledge to use it responsibly and confidently.

Ms. Kathy Harris-Thomas, Facilities Manager

Hello Gunston Families - Home of the Hornets,

I hope everyone has been enjoying their summer break, rather it be summer camps, vacations, or just relaxing! It may seem as though the summer is getting shorter & shorter but it's only the break that has gotten shorter for us all.

My name is Ms. Harris-Thomas, and I am the Facilities Manager here at Gunston Middle School. It is my responsibility to ensure the effective and efficient operation of the facility while serving the educational, recreational and community needs. The Facilities and Custodial staff are here to make sure that the building is safe, clean, and welcoming. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Gunston Middle School.

We are a premiere school, and I am super excited about this upcoming school year because it's a new beginning for and a homecoming for others. The windows have been washed, classrooms cleaned, hallways waxed, grass cut & trimmed, gym floor sealed and countless other items. It takes us all to make this an exceptional year for staff and students. And we are ready!

Welcome, welcome, welcome!

Mr. Luiz Matos, Activities Coordinator

I am Luis Matos, your Activities Director at Gunston Middle School, and I have enjoyed this position for the last seven years.

Part of my responsibilities is to promote all sports and after-school activities assigned by APS for Gunston MS.

Also, I help with the implementation and organizational aspects of all extracurricular activities, including collaboration with community partners to reduce opportunity gaps for students.

Serving as the communication link between the school and APS Transportation Department is something I have been doing with great pleasure.

But my most important task is ensuring that all our activities are safe, adequate, and beneficial for our entire Gunston Community.

Our goal is always to have a safe environment under adult supervision.

I'm excited to continue working for the Gunston Community; I enjoy coffee and chocolates.



Technology Corner

Support and Assistance: I am here to provide guidance, and training to both students and teachers. If you encounter any challenges or need help with using specific tools or software, please don't hesitate to reach out to me. I am always available to assist you.

- o **Student Devices** – 6th grade students returning to APS will need to hand back their old iPads from their APS elementary schools. All 6th graders will receive and configure their iPads in the beginning weeks of school. They will also be familiarized with the [APS Acceptable Use Policy](#) for the 2023-24 school year. More information will be sent to students and families at a later time.
- o **Technical Support** - Students are responsible for keeping their individual devices in good working order. [Families are held responsible for the full cost of repair or replacement of issued \(1:1\) devices that are lost, stolen or damaged as the result of an intentional or negligent act.](#) Students should report any technical issues to their TA teachers. Their TA teachers will report these issues through the technical support system.

Digital Citizenship: Responsible use of technology is paramount. We will discuss digital citizenship throughout the school year, addressing topics such as online safety, privacy, respectful communication, and appropriate use of social media. Together, with the Counseling Team, we will foster a positive digital footprint that reflects our best selves.

Integrating Technology in Learning: Technology should complement and enhance your learning experience. I will work closely with your teachers to integrate technology into their lessons effectively. You can expect to engage in various interactive and creative activities that leverage technology to deepen your understanding of subjects.

Regular Communication: Keep an eye on announcements and updates from me throughout the school year. I will share valuable resources, tips, and exciting opportunities related to technology and education.

Important URLs to note:

ParentVue - If you have any problems with logging into ParentVue or forgot your password, please see the [ParentVue and Canas Help page](#). If you never activated your account for ParentVue, please contact our main office at 703-228-6900. If you are not receiving SchoolTalk emails, please log into your ParentVue account. You can update your email within ParentVue.

SchoolTalk- In August, 2023, APS transitions to ParentSquare as the platform for division-wide communications for families. Families will receive information directly from APS on how to set up an account. ParentSquare allows APS to unify communication from the division, schools and classrooms to PreK-12 families under one umbrella. For questions about ParentSquare, please email parentsquare@apsva.us.

[Download the app for Apple IOS](#) [Download the app for Android](#)

Canvas Observer Accounts - If you'd like access to all of your students' Canvas courses, please follow these [instructions](#).

Please contact our ITC, Rayla Parquet, if you have questions: rayla.parquet@apsva.us



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Important Dates to Remember

Aug 21 - Student schedules go live in Synergy at noon

Aug 24 - 6th Grade and New to Gunston Orientation

Aug 28 - First Day Of School

Sept 1 & 4 - Holiday - Labor Day

Sept 12 - Middle School Back to School Night

Sept 25 - Holiday - Yom Kippur

Oct 9 - No School for Students (County-wide trainings)

Oct 20 - Parent/Teacher Conferences

Oct 27- Multicultural Festival Evening

Nov 7 - End of First Quarter, Grade Preparation Day
(No Students)

Nov 10 - Holiday - Veterans Day

Nov 22, 23 and 24 - Holiday - Thanksgiving Break

Dec 21-Dec 29 - Winter Break

Academic Schedule

We are extremely excited to welcome everyone back to school on August 28! One of the items we know students and families are anxious to know is their class schedule and teacher assignments. Students and families will be able to access this information through StudentVUE and ParentVUE beginning at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, August 21, a week before the first day of school. This date and time are consistent amongst all APS schools this year. Canvas will be available to students beginning on August 28.

Please note that while schedules will be viewable at this time, adjustments will still be made throughout the week of August 21 as enrollments continue. Once student schedules are visible, schools will prioritize schedule adjustments for students that have too few or too many courses, incorrect courses, or scheduling conflicts (more than one class in the same period) prior to the first day of school.

For information on how to access ParentVUE, visit <https://www.apsva.us/parentvue-canvas/>. Students can access information about StudentVUE at <https://www.apsva.us/digital-devices/student-technology-tutorials/>

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

We will deliver SEL lessons twice a week during Teacher Advisory (TA).

Student Services- Dr. Kevon Bruce

Hey Gunston Middle School Families!

My name is Dr. Bruce, and I am the Director of Counseling Services. I hope you are all doing well and eagerly anticipating the return to school. As we prepare to welcome you back, I want to highlight some of the ways we are dedicated to supporting your well-being and creating a positive and enriching environment for everyone.

As the Director of Counseling, I am a pivotal pillar of support within our school community. My school counselors will be available to provide personalized counseling services to students, offering guidance and a listening ear for any challenges your student may encounter. Whether it's academic concerns, social pressures, or personal struggles, the counseling department is here to ensure that each student feels heard, valued, and supported.

In addition to the dedicated counseling support, we have meticulously planned various initiatives to enhance your students' learning experience. Our individualized academic planning involves a focus on personalized learning, allowing each student to learn about all our exciting CTE's and pathways. Furthermore, we have put together a comprehensive social-emotional learning program that aims to develop your emotional intelligence, resilience, and interpersonal skills. Through "TA's" (Teacher Advisory/Homeroom), engaging technology, and peer support activities, we will foster a sense of belonging and inclusivity within our school community.

I am also excited to inform you about our plans to strengthen family-school partnerships. Regular student-led conferences, open houses, and family engagement events will provide opportunities for transparent communication and collaboration, ensuring we work together to nurture your child's growth and development.

As we enter this new academic year, please remember that we are here for you. Gunston Middle School is not just a place of education; it's a community that cares deeply for each and every one of its members. We are committed to supporting your child's academic journey, emotional well-being, and overall success.

Thank you for being an essential part of the Gunston Middle School family. Together, we will make this school year an incredible one!

Class Assignments

We hope this message finds you well. As we gear up for the upcoming academic year, we want to take a moment to address a topic that has arisen in the past – class assignments. We understand that as parents, you may have specific teacher preferences for your child, but we would like to inform you that this year, we will not be accommodating requests for class changes based on these preferences.

At our school, our primary focus is on providing the best learning environment for all students. Our decision-making process for class assignments will be based on careful consideration of various factors, including individual student needs, learning styles, and social dynamics. Our dedicated team of educators will work diligently to create balanced classrooms where each child can thrive academically and socially.

We want to assure you that our teachers are committed professionals who are well-equipped to provide quality education and support to all students, regardless of the class they are assigned to. Our goal is to foster a positive and inclusive learning experience for every child, promoting personal growth and academic achievement.

We understand that you may have concerns or preferences, and we encourage you to share them with us. We value open communication and will always consider important factors that may affect your child's education. However, we kindly request your understanding in this matter as we prioritize the overall well-being of the student body and the logistical challenges involved in classroom assignments.

Rest assured, we will make every effort to ensure that the class placements are made with the utmost care and consideration. If any significant needs arise during the school year, we will address them promptly and with the best interest of the students in mind.

Thank you for your understanding and support in creating a nurturing and stimulating learning environment for all our students. Together, we can make this academic year a successful and fulfilling one for every child.

Prohibited Items

The following items are never allowed at school, on school grounds, or on buses:

- Matches, lighters, alcohol, and tobacco products
- Laser pointer pens
- Items for sale not sponsored by Gunston Middle School
- Large amounts of money
- Weapons (knives, pocket knives, firearms, bombs, bullets, etc.) or “look alike,” weapons (any item that looks like a weapon, including toy guns and knives);
- Alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes, drugs, or “look alike”. Refer to [Policy J-6.3.6](#)

Cell Phones, Laptops, Tablets, Other Portable Devices

APS is committed to assisting students and staff members in creating a 21st-century learning environment. To support this progress, APS issued an iPad to each student. Gunston has a “**Phone Away for the Day**” policy. Cell phones should not be visible during the instructional day, between the hours of 7:50 am to 2:34 pm, and kept in student lockers if brought to school. Students are prohibited from using phones (as well as tablets, and other mobile devices) in restrooms and locker rooms unless there is a medical necessity or emergency. Parents/Guardians, multi-disciplinary team members, or other persons with knowledge of students who require access to personally owned devices as an accommodation shall make requests for such accommodations through their respective multi-disciplinary teams. APS is not responsible for loss or damage of students’ APS issued or personal devices. Parents are responsible for damages, repair costs, and loss as described in the APS Acceptable Use Policy.

GMS Clinic Corner

Hello Gunston Family!

Here are some of the services we provide:

- Routine first-aid and sick-child care
- Emergency care
- Administration of medications (Virginia law requires that all medications, prescription or over-the-counter, given in school be accompanied by a medication authorization form)
- Hearing/vision screenings (for all 7th grade students, new students, and by special request)
- Coordination with teachers of accommodations relating to short-term (i.e. concussions, injuries) and chronic conditions
- Case management of students with complex health-care needs
- Coordination with special education staff and mental health/counseling staff
- Education on a variety of topics to students, staff, and parents
- Prevention measures and student contact tracing of communicable diseases

Helpful Links:

- [School Health](#)
- [Medication Authorization Form](#)
- [Allergy Action Plan](#)
- [Asthma Action Plan](#)
- [Diabetes Management Plan](#)

Reminders:

- All medications in school need a signed Medication Authorization form filled out and brought to school by a parent.
- Accommodation for injuries 3 days or longer require a note from a doctor.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or if you’d like to discuss anything related to your child’s health care needs. We look forward to working with the families and staff!

Have a safe and healthy rest of the summer!!

Clinic Contact Info:

Public Health Nurse: Jill Ramirez Email: jill_ramirez@arlingtonva.us
School Health Aide: Jenny Vasquez Email: jvasquez1@arlingtonva.us
Clinic hours: 7:30 am- 3:00 pm
Clinic phone number: 703.228.6913



The Office of School Nutrition Services provides a variety of nutritious choices for breakfast and lunch every day. Our menus are planned by a registered Dietician in accordance with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The school lunch program is operated under the federally funded National School Lunch program and administered by the USDA and the Virginia Department of Education.

◆ **Breakfast this year will cost \$2.00; lunch is \$3.50. Milk is \$.80 cents.**

Arlington Public Schools provide free meals and reduced-price meals for elementary, middle and high school students who are eligible under the National School Lunch Program and National School Breakfast Program. Children from households whose income is at or below designated financial levels are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals. Applications are available here:

<https://www.apsva.us/food-and-nutrition-services/free-reduced-meal-application/>

We look forward to serving you this school year.

From the Office

Going to be absent or need to get your assignment?

To be sure absences are properly recorded and excused, a parent/guardian must contact the school. A phone call from a parent or guardian to the Attendance Line or an email to the Attendance Secretary will excuse an absence, if the reason meets APS policy. Contact with the school must be made within 48 hours of a student's return to excuse the absence. Please contact your scholars teacher reference to missed assignments.

Attendance hotline: [703-228-6920](tel:703-228-6920)

Email: gunston.attendance@apsva.us

Messages & Deliveries for Your Student

We understand that sometimes students forget things. Please limit phone messages and drop off items to emergency situations only. Please label items, including lunches with your student's name and grade level and place it in the appropriate grade level box inside the front doors of the building.

To keep class disruptions to a minimum students are able to come to the office during their lunch or class transition to pick up their items.

Transportation Questions?

Please remember that the transportation office is open to receive phone calls if you have questions. Additionally, there is a list of frequently asked questions available on the County Website:

www.arlington.k12.va.us/Page/2933

Transportation Call Center: 703-228-6640

The Call Center is open

6:00 am – 6:00 pm weekdays

Fall bus assignments for bus eligible students will be posted in ParentVue the week before school begins.

After School Activities & Late Bus

We encourage every student to get involved at Gunston Middle School. There is something for everyone. We have an extensive After School Activities Program run by our Activities Coordinator, Mr. Matos. Have an idea for a club or activity? Students who want to start a club or activity are encouraged to contact Mr. Matos.

Gunston also has an Interscholastic Sports Program. To try out, students must have a physical dated after May 1st of the current school year. Fall sports include tennis, girls' and boys' soccer, diving, and cheerleading and girls basketball. Winter sports include wrestling and boys' basketball. Spring sports include swimming and track. Tryouts are required for all sports except diving, swimming, wrestling, and track. Late buses are provided for all athletes on game and practice days. Eighth graders can participate in Yorktown sports teams such as cross county, field hockey, football, baseball, softball, volleyball, crew, and lacrosse.

The Intramural Program is an extension of our Interscholastic Sports Program and Physical Education Program. Students are encouraged to participate in activities such as: soccer, volleyball, softball, basketball and ultimate Frisbee

More information will be communicated reference the Intramural Program once school starts. All students are welcome to attend any day they choose Monday, Tuesday and/or Thursday.

There are two After School Periods, with most clubs, teacher office hours and activities taking place during After School Period 1.

After School Period 1 2:45 PM-3:40 PM

After School Period 2 3:40 PM-4:05 PM

Late Buses are provided Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday for students staying after school. **The late bus leaves Gunston at 4:15 PM.**

At the end of August, check the GMS Activities calendar on the school website for more information about activity meeting dates, times, and information.

PE Uniforms

PE uniforms are \$25 (\$13 for the shorts and \$12 for the shirt). If a student cannot purchase a uniform, that should be communicated with their teacher at the beginning of the year and we will provide one for them.





A Message From the Gunston PTA

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I'm so excited to welcome new and existing students and families to Gunston Middle School! As the PTA President, I am looking forward to meeting as many of you as possible as we start a new school year and welcome our new Principal, Carolyn Jackson, and a new Assistant Principal, Erika Sanchez and Dean of Students, Tyrone Stewart.

We have big plans for this year! Our school calendar is packed with engaging events and activities aimed at building a strong community and enhancing your child's learning journey. But we can't do it alone – we need parent volunteers like you! Your support makes a huge difference, whether it's assisting during school functions, organizing fundraisers, or chaperoning field trips (and the occasional dance).

Joining the PTA through our website (<https://gunstonpta.membershiptoolkit.com>) is a fantastic way to stay informed and contribute to Gunston's future. Your involvement matters, and we value your ideas and input.

Let's make this academic year truly memorable and enriching for all our students!

Warmest regards,

Alicia Rich
PTA President