

INSIDE SOMERSET / SOMERSET BERKLEY

Superintendent

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Somerset Berkley Regional
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A Message from the Superintendent

It is always with great excitement and anticipation that we begin a new school year. Teachers, staff, and administrators have been busy preparing for our first day of school. Our custodial and maintenance staff have spent considerable time and effort cleaning, updating, and preparing our buildings for the start of another year; everything looks great! Now, we await the most critical component — our students — to fill our classrooms and engage in meaningful learning experiences.

In light of recent national events, I want to take this opportunity to reaffirm one of our core principles of public education — we are committed to cultivating a culture of respect, civility, inclusion, and equity. In Somerset and Somerset Berkley, our students frequently remind me through their words and actions that they inherently possess the characteristics of kindness, respect, openness, and inclusion that make me proud to be their Superintendent and that give me so much hope for our future.

I wish all of our students and families a successful and happy 2017-2018 school year.

Sincerely,
Jeff Schoonover



Responsive Classroom®

During the week of August 21, fourteen teachers and administrators from SMS participated in Responsive Classroom training. Responsive Classroom is an evidence-based approach to teaching that focuses on the strong link between academic success and social-emotional learning. It addresses engaging academics, positive community, effective management, and developmental awareness. Research shows that the Responsive Classroom approach is associated with higher academic achievement in math and reading and improved school climate.

The middle school will implement Responsive Classroom techniques this year and will expand its initial training to other faculty and staff who were not able to attend.

I want to thank BayCoast Bank and the Bristol County Chamber of Commerce for their generosity in funding this training for our teachers.

School Contact Information

If you have any school-specific questions about the start of the school year, please contact the school. Contact information for each of our schools is found below.

<u>School</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Principal</u>
Chace Street School	538 Chace Street	Mr. Timothy Plante (324-3160)
North Elementary School	580 Whetstone Hill Road	Dr. Paula Manchester (324-3170)
South Elementary School	700 Read Street	Dr. Daniel Hanneken (324-3180)
Somerset Middle School	1141 Brayton Avenue	Dr. Pauline Camara (324-3140)
Somerset Berkley Regional HS	625 County Street	Mr. David Lanczycki (324-3115)

Phone Use on School Buses

Cell phones are an important line of communication between students and families. Improper use of cell phones on school buses, however, can lead to dangerous distractions for our school bus drivers, whose goal it is to safely transport students to and from school.

To ensure the safety of our students and drivers, students must use their phones in a responsible manner. This includes

- keeping phones on vibrate mode,
- using earbuds in one ear only to listen to music so as still to hear instructions from the driver,
- remaining seated at all times and not sharing content on cell phones with other students, which often causes them to lean across the aisle or stand up,
- Not taking pictures or videos of other students, and
- Not watching or listening to inappropriate content

I encourage families to reinforce this message with your children to ensure that everyone is as safe as possible until their return home from school each day. Thank you.

Back to School Paperwork for Parents

As a parent, I always look forward to the first day of school. However, I do not look as fondly at that first evening because it is synonymous with paperwork and forms, which only get magnified with multiple children. In our continued effort to become more efficient in our processes, to decrease our use of paper, and to ease the burden on families and our schools' administrative assistants, parents will be receiving a pre-printed student profile verification form and a health profile verification form containing information that we already have in Aspen, our student information system.

We ask that parents ensure that addresses, phone numbers, emails, and emergency contact information are accurate and still valid. If you have changes to make, you will make only those changes on the form. If there are no changes to make, you will simply check a box indicating no changes. I hope this change is a positive one for everyone. We will review this process in several weeks to make future changes and improvements.

Change to the school day at Somerset Middle School

As Dr. Camara communicated with families during the summer, the student day will be extended by 10 minutes this year to allow students more time at lunch. The student day will begin five minutes earlier (8:00 AM) and end five minutes later (2:40 PM) than in the past.

A concern we heard from students and families was the insufficient amount of time students had at lunch to wait in line, purchase meals, and then eat in a safe and healthy manner. The student lunch period will now be 25 minutes long.

Alphabest

At the beginning of 2016-2017, the Somerset Public Schools welcomed Alphabest, a before and after school program, to each of our elementary schools. Students in Alphabest study different topics each day of the week, including STEM, languages, fitness, and the arts. Students studied American Sign Language and Mandarin Chinese, used digital animation tools to create and tell stories, built Lego robots, and created and performed an end-of-year musical production, among other things. We currently have 70 students enrolled in Alphabest this year and those numbers are growing.

Not only does Alphabest provide a service to families during the before and after school times, but students are engaged in fun learning experiences. To learn more about Alphabest, please visit their website at <https://www.alphabest.org/>.



Opening Days

Grades 1-12

The first day of school for the 2017-2018 School Year is Tuesday, September 5, for students in grades 1-12. This is a full day of school.

Kindergarten

On Wednesday, September 6, Kindergarten students and their parents are invited to attend the school orientation from 9:30 to 10:45 AM at their respective schools. The first regular day of kindergarten in all schools will begin on Thursday, September 7.

All elementary schools run kindergarten classes for pupils who reach their fifth birthday on or before August 31, 2017.

Preschool

Preschool begins on Monday, September 11. The morning session is held Tuesday through Friday from 8:55 am to 11:25 am. The afternoon session is held Monday through Thursday from 12:15 pm to 2:45 pm.

Back to School Nights and other Upcoming Events

Elementary Schools

- September 13 Back to School Night (6:00 pm)
- September 15 Early Release Day (12:30 pm)

Somerset Middle School

- September 8 Student and staff pictures
- September 14 Back to School Night (6:00 pm)
- September 15 Early Release Day (12:00 pm)

Somerset Berkley Regional High School

- September 5 Fall Athletics Wellness Night (6:00 PM)
- October 11 and 26 Parent Teacher Conferences
- September 29 Early Release Day (11:30 am)

October 20 is an early release day for all students (PK-12) for purposes of staff professional development.

Aspen

Aspen, our student information system, is used for attendance, gradebook and many other aspects of student information. Please contact Andrea Smith at 508.324.3100 x231 if you have any questions.

We will provide opportunities this fall for parents to learn more about Aspen and the features it offers parents to access various information for your children. Parents can access Aspen through school and district websites.

School Lunch Program

MySchoolBucks

The Somerset Public Schools and SBRHS offer an online prepaid food service system. This service provides parents with the opportunity to deposit money into their student’s school meal account at any time, to view their children’s account balances, and to view their children’s purchasing history. In addition, families automatically receive low balance email notifications once they have set up that feature. Simply visit www.mySchoolBucks.com and setup your child’s account. Students will be using their same Personal Identification Number (PIN) that they received last year to purchase meals.

Lunch

The cafeterias at the schools will be open for business on the first day of school, Tuesday, September 5, and on all days that schools are in session, except for the day before Thanksgiving. Students will have the opportunity of purchasing a hot lunch, which meets the nutritional standards of the *State Office of School Lunch Program*. Monthly menus and additional offerings are available for viewing at the Somerset Public Schools and Somerset Berkley Regional High School websites.

All lunches include milk. Fruit is available every day.

Elementary Lunch: \$2.80	Middle School Lunch: \$3.00	High School Lunch: \$3.00
Milk: .50 Water: .50	Milk: .50 Water: \$1.00	Milk: .50 Water: \$1.00

Breakfast

Somerset Public Schools and SBRHS will be offering breakfast in the morning to the students in grades kindergarten through twelve. The serving times will be as follows:

Elementary Schools	Middle School	High School
8:20 AM to 8:50 AM	7:25 AM to 7:55 AM	6:50 AM to 7:20 AM

The students will be served in the cafeteria. There will be NO breakfast served for a 90-minute delay school day.

The price of the breakfast for all schools will be \$1.25 for a full meal and \$.30 for a reduced price meal. If your student receives free lunch, they will also be entitled to receive a free breakfast meal.

Some of the items available for breakfast at the elementary schools level will be assorted muffins, bagels with cream cheese or jelly, cereal bars, assorted cereal bowls with milk, fruit, milk and juice. In addition to the breakfast items listed for elementary students, the middle school and high school students will also have available foods such as french toast, pancakes, and hot egg sandwich wraps.

Free and Reduced Meal Eligibility Criteria

The Somerset Public Schools and Somerset Berkley Regional School District utilize the federal guidelines for determining eligibility of children who may receive free and reduced price meals served under the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

Application forms with a letter to parents are available at the Superintendent’s Office, at your child’s school office, or can be found through the Somerset Public Schools and Somerset Berkley Regional School District websites. The information provided on the application is confidential and will be used only for the purpose of determining eligibility and verifying data.

Applications may be submitted any time during the school year. If you are not eligible now but have a decrease in income, become unemployed, or have an increase in family size and fall below the income limit, you may fill out an application at that time.

Students who receive free or reduced price meals simply enter a Personal Identification Number (PIN) just like every other student. Therefore, confidentiality is maintained.

