

# WEST TOWSON ELEMENTARY



Jason Barnett, Principal  
Christopher Carter, Assistant Principal

School Office: 443-809-3869  
Health Suite: 443-809-8037

WTES Website: <http://westtowsones@bcps.org>

Go West Newsletter  
October 2023



## OCTOBER

- 9-31 Toiletry Drive
- 12 Central Area Elementary School Capacity Relief Boundary Study Meeting 2- George Washington Carver Center - Cafeteria - 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
- 13 PTA Sponsored Trunk or Treat 5:45 PM - 6:30 PM & Movie Night Afterwards on the WTES Back Field
- 16 Pumpkin Run Grade 4 and 5
- 19 WTES Spirit Day - Wear You Blue and Gold
- 20 Schools Closed for Teachers and Students (MSEA Convention)



## A LOOK AHEAD TO NOVEMBER

- 2 Central Area Elementary School Capacity Relief Boundary Study Meeting 3- George Washington Carver Center - Cafeteria - 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
- 3 Closes Dismiss 3 Hours Early for Students - WTES to dismiss at 1:05 PM. No Afternoon Pre-Kindergarten - Grade Reporting and Data Analysis - Teachers On Duty
- 5 Daylights Savings Time Ends
- 8 WTES Spirit Day - Favorite Color Day - Wear It from Your Head to Toe
- 6-10 Ballroom Dance Program - Grade 4 and 5
- 10 Individuals Fall Picture Day
- 11 Veteran's Day
- 13 Systemwide Professional Development Day - School Closed for Students - Teachers on Duty - Diwali Observed
- 14 Report Cards Distributed
- 14-17 American Education Week
- 16 Central Area Elementary School Capacity Relief Boundary Study Public Information Session 2 - Loch Raven High School - 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
- 17 Generations Day  
WTES Spirit Day - Wear You Blue and Gold



20	Pre-Kindergarten Conference Day - No School for Pre-Kindergarten Students
21	Elementary Conference Day - Schools Closed for all Students
22-24	Thanksgiving Holiday - School and Offices Closed

## FROM THE DESK OF THE PRINCIPAL

### JASON BARNETT

Fall has arrived and we have completed our first full month of school! As the weather turns cooler and we move through the second month of the school year, the students have adjusted well to their classroom procedures and are focused upon learning. The teachers and staff provide the students with a comprehensive instructional program to help them make strong progress. We just passed the midpoint of the first quarter, it is important that families remain informed of their children's class work, homework, test performance, and attendance. I strongly recommend that all families set up an account in FOCUS to access students' grades and class information. This is an effective way to carefully monitor the children's progress in school. As we head toward the end of the first quarter, it is important that student's complete assignments and hand them in a timely manner. This year, the first quarter ends on November 4, 2023. All students in grades one through five will receive a first quarter report card on Monday, November 14, 2023. American Education Week is just around the corner, November 13-17, 2023. Thank you to all who have completed the volunteer application and training process. Please remember that volunteer training must be completed before parents can perform any volunteer activity at school, including chaperoning field trips. In addition, thank you to all the families who have joined the West Towson Elementary PTA. A portion of the PTA membership dues and the funds collected through their fundraising efforts help to enrich our students' academic program and elementary school experience. We are so fortunate to have such a caring, supportive community. We appreciate your efforts as we work together for all "our" children. Thank you for the important role you play in our Community of Learners! Happy Autumn!

#### PRIVATE SCHOOL REQUEST FOR RECORDS

Occasionally, West Towson Elementary School receives requests from parents to send their child's records to private educational institutions for consideration of placement. As per Board Rule 5230, Student Records, this request must be received in writing along with a signed copy of the BCPS Consent for Release of Records form to release any information to another school or educational institution. Transcript requests are processed on a first come, first served basis. All requests will be processed within 15 business days after receipt of the completed form and payment in the amount of \$5.00.



Please do not send these requests to your child's homeroom teacher. Instead, please send all requests to the main office to be processed.

#### SCHOOL PICTURES



Life Touch Studios, our new school picture vendor, will be at West Towson Elementary School on Friday, November 10. All of our students will be photographed. Additional information will be forthcoming. The fall pictures will be available for the holidays, for those individuals who wish to give them as gifts.

## THANK YOU

Our Westies sure like to read and that is music to our teachers' ears.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the WTES PTA sponsored Book Fair. The PTA reports that the sales were incredible. The success of this event would not have been possible without our dedicated book fair volunteers.



## BCPS OFFICE OF TRANSPORTATION

The Office of Transportation is excited to launch a new pilot program - Bus Where, a location tracking service for all our buses!



### **What is BusWhere?**

BusWhere is an app which allows subscribers to see the location of your child's bus in real time on your phone and to receive notification when the bus is approaching your bus stop. BusWhere allows you to download a free Android or iOS app to track the bus and view the Estimated Time

of Arrival (ETA) to your assigned bus stop.

### **How Do I Register for the App?**

This week, using the contact information in FOCUS, parents of all bus riders will receive an email from BusWhere with information on how to register for a secure account. So, be sure to update your email address, if necessary, in your FOCUS Parent Portal. During registration, you are automatically assigned to the bus stop as shown in FOCUS and will receive a notification when the bus is getting close to your stop. \*ETA's for pre-k bus stops are not yet available in the app. Access is secured with a login and controlled centrally by an Office of Transportation program administrator to make sure only authorized parties can view the bus's location.

### **Whom Do I Contact with Concerns/Questions?**

If the app is not showing the bus at the correct location or you are not receiving notifications, you may contact BusWhere directly at [support@buswhere.com](mailto:support@buswhere.com).

## PLEASE BE ON TIME

We need your active support to ensure that our students attend school on a consistent basis, and your children need your help to get them here every day and on time. Creating a safe, supportive, and positive learning environment for your child is paramount. We appreciate all that you do for your children, and we look forward to working as a team to improve achievement for all students. The doors to the school open at 9:05 AM, and students must be in their classroom and ready for instruction by 9:20 AM, to be considered on time.



## MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ATTENDANCE RULES

A student is counted present for a full day if the student is in attendance four hours or more of the school day. A student is counted present for 1/2 day if in attendance for at least two hours of the school day, but less than four hours. Students present for less than two hours will be recorded as absent. Attendance is a critical component of student success.



The goal of BCPS students is to achieve 95% attendance each school year, which equates to eight absences per year. If your child is sick and cannot attend school, please email their classroom teacher and Mrs. Sidou, Front Office Secretary at [asidou@bcps.org](mailto:asidou@bcps.org). Our School Nurse, Mrs. Vanderwal, can be reached at 443-809-8037 or by email at [lvanderwal@bcps.org](mailto:lvanderwal@bcps.org). Masks will continue to be optional this school year for students and staff. COVID updates will be provided to staff, students, and families by BCPS, Mrs. Vanderwal, and Mr. Barnett.

## ATTENDANCE: A KEY TO YOUR STUDENT'S SUCCESS

Research has proven a high correlation between regular school attendance and academic performance. Attendance is the key to high school graduation and college and career readiness. Students who regularly attend school are more likely to read on grade level, less likely to drop out of school, and more likely to graduate on time. A child who misses a day of school misses a day of learning. Although 2 days per month may not seem like a lot, it translates into 20 days per year or one month of school. Over the course of thirteen years of school, it translates into 260 days, or nearly 1 ½ years of school.



Schools are responsible for teaching your child. But schools can't do their job if your child is absent or chronically late. Learning builds day by day. Being on time matters too. A student who is 10 minutes late

daily will miss 30 hours of instruction during the school year. Although students can copy notes or make up missing assignments, they can never regain other important factors in learning: the discussion, the questions, the group interactions, the explanations by the teacher, and the thinking that makes learning interesting and meaningful.

Your child's success in school depends on having a solid educational background that can only be gained through regular school attendance. Attending school regularly helps students feel better about school and themselves. Here Are Ways You Can Improve Your Child's School Attendance:

- Talk with your child about the importance of attending school regularly and on time.
- Ensure your child goes to school every day unless he/she is truly sick.
- Establish a regular bedtime and morning routine.
- Lay out clothes and pack backpack the night before.
- Schedule family trips and doctor appointments after school when possible.
- Develop back up plans for getting your child to school if something comes up.
- Talk to teachers, counselors, and school support staff for advice if your child feels anxious about going to school.
- When your child is absent, send in a written note and be sure to include the date(s) and reason
- LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO SHOW THAT EVERY SCHOOL DAY COUNTS! THE RESEARCH IS CLEAR. ATTENDANCE IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN SCHOOL SUCCESS.





# Attendance Matters: Absences & Tardies Add Up!

**Missing 1 or 2 days a week may not seem like much but...**

If your child misses...	That equals...	Which is...	Over 13 years of schooling...
1 day every 2 weeks	20 days/year	4 weeks/year	Nearly 1 1/2 years
1 day/week	40 days/year	8 weeks/year	Over 2 1/2 years
2 days/week	80 days/year	16 weeks/year	Over 5 years
3 days/week	120 days/year	24 weeks/year	Nearly 8 years

## TO SEND OR NOT TO SEND

How does a parent decide when to send a child to school and when to keep a child home? Maryland State Law requires parents to send a child to school every day. Every Baltimore County Public School has a full-time school nurse, who is able to evaluate children who develop signs of illness during the school day. The daily decision should be weighed in the favor of sending your child to school. However, in the best interest of the child and to minimize the spread of germs, it is important for parents to know when it is safe to send a child to school and when it is best to keep a child at home.

### A child may safely be sent to school if he/she:

- Does not have a fever, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- Has a chronic health problem and you and his/her health care professional have a plan for meeting health needs at school.
- Has a mild cough or cold symptoms without fever or breathing difficulties.
- Has a temperature under 100 degrees for 24 hours (wait six hours after the last dose of Tylenol or Ibuprofen before checking the temperature).
- Has a stomachache but does not have a fever, vomiting, or diarrhea.



**A child should be kept at home from school, and you should consult with his/her health care provider if he/she has:**

- A fever of more than 100 degrees.
- vomited two or more times (as a single episode of vomiting can be caused by variety of non-illness related issues).
- diarrhea two or more times (a single episode of diarrhea is not a symptom of illness).
- severe pain.
- Feel free to call the school nurse, Lisa Vanderwal, at 443-809-3869, if you are not sure if it is safe to send your child to school.

**CARPOOL REMINDERS**

Please make sure that you drive in a slow and careful manner on the school campus.

Please be respectful of others and move forward to ensure that your children are safely buckled in their seats or car seats.

Elementary school children should be expected to buckle themselves into their seats.

Please make sure you are following Maryland car safety laws by using the correct car/booster seats.

Please make sure that you arrive on time to pick up your child.



**CHANGING FROM AIR CONDITIONING TO HEATING**



To prepare for the winter season, the Department of Physical Facilities will be converting schools from cooling to heating beginning Monday, October 23, 2023. It is necessary for the Department of Physical Facilities to shut down the cooling system because, unlike residential systems, most school mechanical systems cannot automatically switch from cooling to heating.

Every effort will be made to ensure that the semi-annual changeover takes place with as little inconvenience as possible.

**BCPS STUDENT HANDBOOK**

Over the past few weeks, Mr. Barnett and Mr. Carter met with to present the BCPS Student Handbook 2023-2024. The handbook provides the students with expectations related to school behaviors, including consistent attendance, respect for and property, and technology usage. The handbook also the rights and responsibilities of students in the school environment.



classes

positive  
people  
includes

## INTERRUPTIONS TO THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

All interruptions to the instructional program are discouraged. Visitors and parents should report directly to the school office and transact business with the school secretaries. Teachers cannot accept parent/guardian calls while they are teaching. Should it be urgent to talk with a teacher



personally during the school day, contact the school secretaries who will ask the teacher to return the call as soon as possible.

In order to reduce interruptions to classrooms, the office will follow the procedures described below.

- The office staff will call the classroom if the parent/guardian drops off a lunch, pair of glasses, or a backpack.
- The office staff will not interrupt instruction, but will instead ask the parent/guardian to email the teacher, if the parent/guardian drops off clothing, water bottles, library books, instruments, homework, projects, snacks, etc. These items can be placed on the “student belongings table” in the vestibule. The teacher will allow the student to retrieve their item/s at a time that instruction will not be interrupted.

Thank you for your continued support of the strong instructional program at West Towson Elementary School!

## SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN

All Baltimore County Public Schools are required to have a detailed School Emergency Plan. These plans will help to ensure the safety of all Baltimore County Public School students, staff members, and visitors. The plans are updated each year, and copies are shared with local police and fire departments. During the school year, a variety of drills, including fire, evacuation, lock down, severe weather, and ALICE, will be conducted.



One important aspect of the plan includes detailed procedures necessary for accounting for all members of the school community in the event of an emergency. This is one reason that it is critical that all visitors sign in and out, as they enter and leave the school. If visitors happen to be in the school building during an emergency, we need to be able to account for everyone in the building. The goal of the plan is to keep all members of the community safe and secure. Your assistance with the procedures is greatly appreciated.

## EMERGENCY INFORMATION

It is important that all families return the Student Contact Information Form that was sent home with children in their gold folder in August or update their child's information in Focus. Without this important information, we will be unable to contact family members in the event of an emergency. The school will release your children to only the people whose names you have listed on the form or in Focus.



The emergency forms are essential if West Towson needs to close early. If all Baltimore County schools close early, parents will not be contacted individually. As a courtesy to our families, a Connect-Ed call will be sent out from the school to all primary phone number in Focus. If your children attend Play Centers, they will follow the dismissal procedures you shared with the Play Centers staff.

Please review emergency closing procedures throughout the year with your children. If only West Towson Elementary closes early, we will contact parents through a Connect-Ed call and use the information on the Student Contact Information Form to determine how the child will be dismissed.

## WATER BOTTLES

Students are encouraged to bring refillable water bottles to school each day. Water is available throughout the school, so students may easily refill their bottles. Water has many health benefits and staying hydrated is good for the brain and learning. Cone cups are available at the water coolers, but students lose instructional time when they leave the classroom for drinks. Our school is a Maryland Green School and using refillable water bottles produces less waste than using paper cups.



## COMMUNICATIONS

Communication from West Towson will occur in a variety of ways. Teachers will communicate with families through email and by phone. Parents will receive a monthly newsletter through email and any timely communication will occur by messages sent by phone or email by Mr. Barnett or Mr. Carter. In order to stay updated on current instruction and events at West Towson, visit the WTES website at <http://westtowsones.bcps.org> and follow on Twitter at @WestTowsonES.

Please make sure your phone numbers and email addresses are updated in our system. If you need to contact the school, please call 443-809-3869. You can also email front office staff using the following email addresses:

Jason Barnett, Principal - [jbarnett@bcps.org](mailto:jbarnett@bcps.org)  
Christopher Carter, Assistant Principal - [ccarter8@bcps.org](mailto:ccarter8@bcps.org)  
Deborah Ford, Administrative Assistant - [dford3@bcps.org](mailto:dford3@bcps.org)  
Athena Sidou, Front Office Secretary - [asidou@bcps.org](mailto:asidou@bcps.org)

## CHANGES TO DISMISSAL PLANS

West Towson Elementary School will be responsible for dismissing children according to the information that parents provided on the WTES internal online transportation form. Any changes in dismissal must be communicated to the school office in writing. Parents are asked to assist with dismissal procedures by making certain that children are clear about dismissal plans before they enter school each morning. Last minute changes in plans are often confusing to children. All changes in transportation plans must be put in writing and sent to the children's teachers no later than the mornings of the changes. Adjustments in transportation will not be made without written approval from parents. When emailing the dismissal change, parents must email both the classroom teacher as well as the office secretaries, Mrs. Ford ([dford3@bcps.org](mailto:dford3@bcps.org)) and Mrs. Sidou ([asidou@bcps.org](mailto:asidou@bcps.org)). Staff members are often engaged in duties which may prevent the timely receipt of your email.

All changes need to be completed before 3:00 PM, in order for the office staff to reach the children affected by the changes before the end of the school day. End of the day phone calls to the office to change your children's dismissal plans create many problems for the school. These calls should be limited to emergencies only. When numerous calls are made to the office near the end of the school day, it is difficult for the office to honor these requests. Parents will be asked to fax or email a signed note if the change is made at the end of the school day.





The WTES arrive and dismissal procedures can be found in the WTES Family Handbook that you should have received in your child's gold folder during the Sneak-A-Peek event, or on the first day of school. Please review these arrival and dismissal procedures with your children. The procedures have been designed to ensure the safety of all students at our school. Your patience, courtesy, and willingness to work with the school will assist us in well-organized and safe dismissals. Please contact Mr. Barnett or Mr. Carter at 443-809-3869, if you have any questions or concerns regarding these procedures. Once again, your assistance and cooperation is greatly appreciated as we work together to ensure the safety of the West Towson Elementary School community.

### ATTENTION VOLUNTEERS

During the 2023 - 2024 school year, would you like to... chaperone a field trip, attend a class party, be a mystery reader, serve as a room parent, or a classroom/school volunteer? In order to interact with West Towson students during the school day (in any capacity) you **MUST** be volunteer trained.



Each year parents are asked to complete volunteer training. Please be proactive and complete these forms as soon as possible. Volunteer training can be accessed online at [www.bcps.org](http://www.bcps.org) under the 'Community' tab and is titled 'Volunteers'. All volunteers must complete the volunteer application **AND** participate in an orientation/training session annually. You will be provided with a certificate once you successfully complete the training. **Please submit the volunteer application and the valid training certificate to West Towson's Front Office Secretary, Athena Sidou.** These may be submitted by hard copy or electronically to [asidou@bcps.org](mailto:asidou@bcps.org). Thank you for your willingness to help



## SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

### Why choose Balance Point Wellness?

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- PAPER PRODUCTS

**IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
MILBROOK ELEMENTARY**

**SPONSORED BY THE WEST  
TOWSON CHARACTER CREW**

Help us to get  
our hygiene  
pantry started!

**We are accepting  
donations from  
October 9-31, 2023**





## October 2023 Calendar of Events — Children

### Story Times

#### Infant Story Time: Babies and Books

Infant (birth to 12 months)  
with adult

Tuesdays  
10:30 a.m.

Designed for newborns  
and crawlers; siblings and  
all abilities welcome.

#### Family Story Time:

Birth to 5 years old  
with adult

Thursdays  
10:30 a.m.

Designed for children who  
are newly mobile and  
active, to learning and  
able to sit and listen for  
short periods; siblings and  
all abilities welcome.

### Library Closed

**Indigenous Peoples' Day**  
**Monday, October 9th**

**Veteran's Day**  
**Friday and Saturday**  
**November 10-11th**



#### Baby Craft Time

Monday  
October 23rd  
10:30 a.m.  
Towson Branch  
Birth to 4

Join us for open ended art  
projects as your little one  
explores different art  
materials in a variety of  
shapes, colors, and sizes.  
Dress for a mess!

#### Happy Birthday to Us!

Saturday, Oct. 21st  
1:00 - 2:00 p.m.  
Ages 4 to 11  
Celebrate the 75th  
anniversary of Baltimore  
County Public Library with  
a birthday party featuring  
crafts, activities, dancing  
and singing "Happy  
Birthday" to the library.

### Saturday Fun

Saturday, Oct. 7th  
Anti-Racism Story Time  
10:30

Saturday, Oct. 14th  
Lego Fun 10:30

Saturday, Oct 21st  
Library Birthday  
1:00-2:00

Saturday, Oct 28th  
Paws to Read  
10:30-11:30



#### Scavenger Hunt in the Children's Area

All of October  
Young visitors to the  
Library can search the  
children's area during our  
monthly scavenger hunt.  
Bring your finished sheet  
to the Librarian at the  
desk for a prize!

## October 2023 Calendar of Events — Adults & Teens

### Teen Programs

#### Teen Time: SAT & College Prep

Monday, October 2nd  
4:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Ages 13 -17

We have test prep resources, including official SAT practice tests, and recruitment information from local colleges to help you get ready for upcoming college applications.

#### Teen Time

Monday, October 16th  
4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Ages 13—17

Join us for games, crafts, movies, snacks, and more.

#### LGBTQ+ Teen Time

Monday, October 23rd  
4:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Towson Branch Teen Room

Ages 13 -17

Join us after school to find community and friends among fellow LGBTQ+ teens. We'll be hanging out for games, crafts, movies and more.



#### Interactive Movie: Willy Wonka

Saturday, October 7th  
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

All Ages

Enter a world of pure imagination at an interactive movie screening of Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (1971). You've never seen Willy Wonka like this before. We bring the classic movie to life with props and activities as we sing along and respond on cue. Each attendee will receive a goody bag with a copy of the interactive script, novelty items and sweet treats. Supplies are limited. First come, first served.

#### 3D Printing for Beginners

Tuesday, October 10th  
6:00 p.m.-7:30 p.m.

Towson Meeting Room  
Adults

Let's build things together. During this Librarian-guided training, Learn the basics of how 3D printing works and become certified to use a branch 3D printer independently.

**Children under 15 must be accompanied by an adult.**

#### The Hang Out

Tuesday, Oct. 17th  
5:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m.

Towson Meeting Room

Adults

Meet new people while exploring fun activities, games and crafts at this social hour for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Support staff and caregivers welcome.





HERE IS A GUIDE TO HELP YOU DECIDE  
WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL

## I NEED TO STAY HOME IF...



I have a Fever	I am Vomiting	I have Diarrhea	I have a Rash	I have Head Lice	I have an Eye Infection	I have been in the Hospital	I have COVID – like symptoms OR I'm waiting for a COVID test result.
Temperature of 100 or higher.	Two or more episodes within the past 24 hours.	Within the past 24 hours.	Body rash with itching or fever.	Itchy head, live head lice.	Redness, itchy, &/or crusty drainage from eye.	Hospital stay or ER visit.	Sore throat, congestion, cough, runny nose. New loss of taste / smell. Muscle pain, chills or extreme tiredness. New or severe headache.
I am ready to go back to school when I am:							
Fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication (i.e. Tylenol, Motrin).	Free from vomiting or until cleared by medical provider.	Free from diarrhea for at least 24 hours or until cleared by medical provider.	Free from a rash, itching, fever. Or until my provider determined that the illness is not an infectious disease.	Treated with a pediculocide at home and information is provided to the school nurse.	Evaluated by my medical provider and have a note to return to school.	Released by my medical provider to return to school.	Negative COVID test and has other diagnosis from the doctor & no more symptoms.... OR free of COVID symptoms for 10 days.

**Absence Policy:** A student absent from school shall present a note immediately upon return to school. The note, signed by the parent/guardian, shall include the name of the student, the date of, and the reason for the absence no later than five days after the student's return to school. If a student is absent for an extended period of time due to illness (*greater than 3 consecutive days*), a written statement of explanation from the physician is required no later than five days after the student's return to class.