

Welcome to the 2025-26 School Year

"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success." – Henry Ford.

Aug 13, 2025

Dear Elkridge Elementary School Families and Community,

Our school's energy is already rising, and the **entire staff and I are eager to kick off this new year with you.** It is a privilege for me to join this community as your new principal. Alongside our new administrative team, we are prepared to lead the way in *"Going 100% - All In"* for our students. We understand that you are your child's first and most vital teacher, and we are dedicated to building on the solid foundation you have established. Our aim is for every student to feel a strong sense of belonging and be empowered to achieve their full potential. We look forward to collaborating with all of you to make this a year of learning, growth, and success.

Your active participation is especially important during these elementary years. Open communication is essential. Please feel free to contact your child's teachers at any time to stay updated on their academic progress, assignments, and activities. We also warmly welcome you to join us at school events throughout the year. Your involvement helps foster a vibrant learning community where everyone feels connected and supported.

"Going 100% - All In" also involves strengthening our community ties. We are excited to collaborate with the PTA executive board to create a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere where everyone's voice is heard. Whether you're a parent, grandparent, guardian, or community member, we invite you to join us in nurturing a community where every student can thrive.

Attendance: Going All In For Every School Day

We want YOUR scholar, at school, on time, every day!

Regular attendance is a cornerstone of your child's success, and we appreciate your partnership in making every day count. This year, we're committed to giving our students 100% in the classroom, but we can't do it without you.

Let's aim high and work together to reach the Maryland State Department of Education's 96% exemplary attendance benchmark. While we understand that occasional absences are unavoidable, every school day missed can impact a child's academic progress and social connections.

A few essential facts to keep in mind:

- Missing just two days of school per month adds up to 18 lost days of learning over the year—that's nearly four weeks.
- Persistent absences can impact a child's ability to form strong friendships and establish a sense of belonging within our school community.
- Poor attendance patterns in the early grades can lead to reading difficulties and a pattern of missing school in later years.

Let's celebrate our progress! Last year, we achieved a 94.2% attendance rate, representing an increase from the 93.8% rate recorded the previous year. This shows that our collective efforts are making a real difference. This year, let's be "all in" on getting our students here, on time, every day. Thank you for your partnership and dedication to making this a successful year for every EES scholar!

Important Information on Our Targeted Title I Status

EES is a **Targeted Title I school**, which is the first step toward becoming a fully funded Title I school. This means we currently receive federal funds to provide additional support to a smaller, targeted group of students, helping them achieve their academic goals. Our goal is to continue growing this funding so we can expand our support to every student in our school.

These targeted funds are a direct result of our community's support and have already made a significant impact. Title I funding has allowed us to add a Reading Specialist, bringing our total to four, and to hire three Math Specialists. We are also in the process of hiring a new Family and Community Engagement contact. These new team members will provide crucial support to our students and families.

To continue receiving these vital funds and to take the next step toward becoming a fully funded Title I school, it's essential that families complete the [Free and Reduced Price Meals \(FARMS\) application](#). The more families who complete this form, the more funding and support our school can receive. We will be sharing more details about what our Targeted Title I status means for students and families at a later time.

We encourage **all families** to complete the [FARMS application](#), even if you don't think you'll qualify. Eligibility also offers additional benefits, including discounts for summer programs, SATs, recreation programs, and more. For further information, please visit the HCPSS Title I Program webpage at <https://www.hcpss.org/academics/title-i-program/>.

Student Placement

A great deal of time and thoughtful consideration has been invested in creating our classroom placements for the 2025-2026 school year. Our dedicated staff carefully considered student learning styles, academic needs, and social dynamics to create balanced and equitable classes at every grade level.

We understand that you may have specific preferences for your child, and we genuinely appreciate your trust and positivity as we make these important decisions. Thank you for helping your child understand that every teacher at EES is committed to their success and growth. We are confident that they will build strong connections with their new classmates and teacher in the coming weeks.

To ensure a smooth start to the year, please remember that your [Family File](#) MUST be completed BEFORE you can see your child's teacher on or after Thursday, August 21st.

HCPSS Family File: Your All-In Connection to EES

We're going "all in" on making sure we have the most accurate and up-to-date information for your child. The **Family File** is how you provide us with essential emergency and contact details. *You must verify and/or update this information for each of your children every school year.*

Your Family File MUST be completed before you can see your child's teacher on or after Thursday, August 21st.

You can access and complete the Family File by logging into your [HCPSS Connect Synergy](#) account. Just select **Online Registration** at the top right of the page and then choose **Family File Verification**. Please note that while you can complete your [Family File](#) now, other resources, such as homerooms, teachers, and bus routes, will not be available until closer to the start of the school year.

Once logged in, parents/guardians will be asked to update or provide the following *information: family details, parent/guardian contact information, emergency contact(s), and student details, 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 the Family File, rather than the previous process of completing it 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 are now found in one location. Releases include media (photo use), data confidentiality, and student creative work.
- [Resources on completing the Family File](#) may be found online. Answers to frequently asked questions on [Family File](#) and [HCPSS Connect](#) are available on the HCPSS Help site.

Opening School Information

The first day of school is **Monday, August 25th**! We are so excited to welcome our scholars and kick off a fantastic year of learning. Preschool and PreKindergarten/RECC students start on Thursday, August 28th.

Our bell schedule is as follows:

- **School Doors Open:** 9:10 a.m. (Breakfast is available in the cafeteria)
- **Late Bell & Instruction Begins:** 9:25 a.m.
- **Dismissal:** 3:55 p.m.

Every minute with our students counts, so please plan to have your child(ren) at school on time each day. If you are dropping your child off by car, we recommend considering morning traffic when planning your route to avoid delays.

This year, we will strictly enforce the ***HCPSS protocol that requires any student arriving after the 9:25 a.m. late bell to be escorted to the front office and signed in by an adult.*** Your support in ensuring students arrive on time is greatly appreciated.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

The first week of school can be chaotic with new routines. *We highly encourage you to have your child arrive and be dismissed from school the same way every day, as this helps them quickly learn their new procedures.*

On Monday, August 25th, and throughout the first week, several staff members will be outside to help direct traffic and greet students. Please follow their directions to ensure a safe and smooth process for everyone. We will be sharing updated arrival and dismissal procedures as the new school year approaches, so please keep an eye out for that information.

Upcoming Events: Open House & Back-to-School Night

We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events! We've scheduled these opportunities for you to connect with our staff and community before the first day of school.

Open House & Student Orientations - Friday, August 22nd

On this day, students and families can meet their new teachers and see their classrooms. To ensure a smooth process for everyone, we have scheduled specific times for different grade levels:

- **Pre-Kindergarten Orientation & Open House:** 10:00 - 10:45 a.m.
- **Kindergarten Orientation & Open House:** 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
- **New Student Orientation (Gr. 1-5):** 1:30 - 2:00 p.m.
- **Grades 1-5 Open House:** 2:00 - 3:00 p.m.

The time between these events will be dedicated to allowing teachers to prepare their classrooms for the first week of school.

Back-to-School Nights - Monday, September 8th and Thursday, September 11th

Please note our Back-to-School Night dates. Our original communication had the Primary BTSN listed as Tuesday, September 9th, and we sincerely apologize for any confusion. The **correct date** for PreSchool, PreK, K, 1st, and 2nd grade is **Monday, September 8th**.

Monday, September 8th - Primary Back to School Night

- PreSchool @ 5:30 pm
- Grades PK-2 @ 6:00 - 7:00 pm

Thursday, September 11th - Intermediate Back to School Night

- GT Presentation @ 5:30 pm
- Grades 3 - 5 @ 6:00 - 7:00 pm

We want this evening to be a valuable and meaningful experience for everyone. To help us make this happen, we'd love your feedback on how we can make the evening more effective and provide more opportunities for you to connect. Please take a few minutes to [complete this brief survey](#) related to Back to School Night. Thank you for your valuable input!

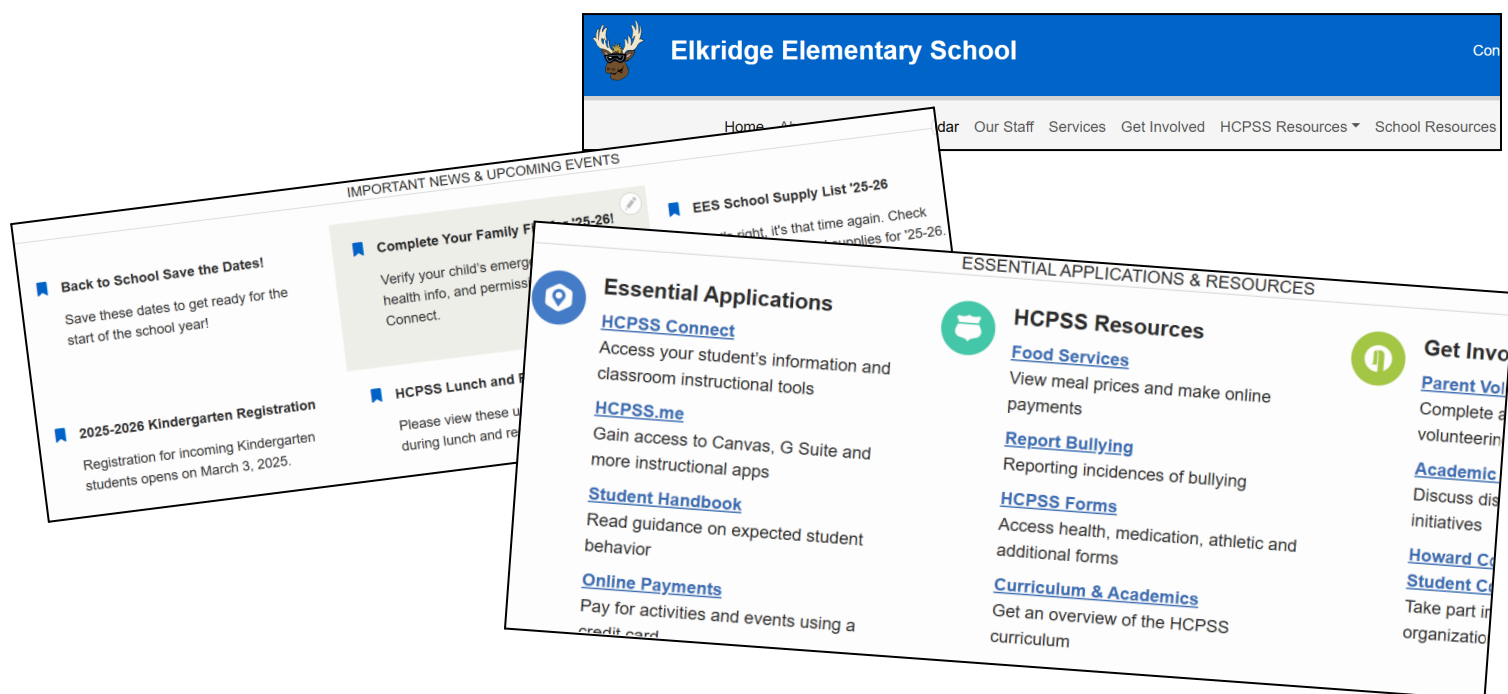
We look forward to seeing you all soon!

See you soon,

Ms. Danielle Shanks, Mr. Jonathan Swann, and Ms. Lashonne Wright

"100% - ALL In!"

Visit our school website for more information. <https://ees.hcpss.org/>



Introducing the 2025-2026 EES Staff!

Each year brings positive change, which includes some additions to our staff and changes in roles. At the same time, we extend warm wishes to our teachers who have ventured out of the Elk's-ridge in search of new opportunities.

We are delighted to present our staff for the 2025 –2026 academic year:

Administrative Team

Ms. Shanks - Principal
Ms. Wright - Assistant Principal
Mr. Swann - Assistant Principal

Front Office Staff

Ms. Ekert - Principal Secretary
Ms. Standard - Teacher Secretary
Ms. Dalton-Bey - Teacher Secretary
Ms. Vaughn - .5 Teacher Secretary

Health Room Staff

Ms. Brown - Nurse
Ms. Kelly - Health Assistant

PreSchool Team (3 yr. olds)

Ms. Hancock - RECC teacher
Ms. Jackson-Shields RECC para

General Ed Paraeducators

Ms. Field - 5th gr para
Ms. Robinson - 1 - 4 gr para
Ms. Wilson - 1 - 4 gr para
Ms. Redd - 1-4 gr para

Curriculum Coaches

Ms. Barrett - Literacy Coach
Ms. DiMartino - Math Coach
Ms. Kim - ELD Coach

Pre-Kindergarten Team (4 yr. olds)

Ms. Harvey - PreK teacher
Ms. Dunn - PreK teacher
Ms. Hughes - PreK RECC teacher
Ms. Washington - PreK RECC teacher
Ms. Gambo - RECC para
Ms. Rhim - PreK para
Ms. Tinnerella - PreK para

Specialists

Ms. King - Reading Specialist
Ms. Cooke - Reading Specialist
Ms. Barr - Reading Specialist
Ms. Darden - Reading Specialist (TI)
Ms. Arroyo - ELD teacher
Ms. Schipske - ELD teacher
Ms. Chamberlain - ELD para
Ms. Shilling - GT teacher
Ms. O'Carroll - Math Specialist (TI)
Ms. Stansbury - Math Specialist (TI)
Ms. Benne - Math Specialist (TI)
Ms. Rager - Math Teacher

Student Support Team

Ms. OliverMcCain - Counselor
Ms. Szalecki - Counselor
Ms. Holland - Student Engagement teacher
Ms. McDonald - Student Engagement para
Ms. Betz - Psychologist
Ms. Hollis - PPW
Ms. Kelly - HCPSS Social Worker
Ms. Mangalino - Social Worker
Vacancy - Family & Community Engagement Liaison (TI)

Kindergarten Team

Ms. Alvarez - Kdg teacher *
Ms. Neighoff - Kdg teacher
Ms. Kirby - Kdg teacher
Ms. Hibbard - Kdg teacher
Ms. Hurlock - Kdg teacher
Ms. Cunningham - Kdg para
Ms. Whitman - Kdg para

Related Arts Team

Ms. Zinn - PE teacher
Ms. Pendergast - PE teacher
Mr. Stoner - .6 PE teacher
Ms. Green - Media Specialist*
Ms. Taschenberger - .6 Strings teacher
Ms. Loughry - Music teacher
Ms. Ross - Music teacher
Ms. Wegman Ey - .6 Band teacher
Ms. Valuntis - Art teacher
Ms. Pendleton - Art teacher
Ms. Seh - .6 media para
Ms. Tiralla - Technology teacher
Ms. Schott - .5 media / .5 Tech teacher

Custodial Team

Mr. Fields - Day Chief
Mr. Powell - Night Chief
Ms. Tamba - Custodian
Mr. Holloman - Custodian
Mr. Goods - Custodian

First Grade Team

Ms. Simmons - 1st gr. teacher*
Ms. Beichler - 1st gr teacher
Ms. Paik - 1st gr teacher
Ms. Woodlon - 1st gr teacher
Ms. Myers - 1st gr teacher
Ms. Sorrells - 1st gr teacher

Food Service Team

Ms. Noah - Cafeteria manager
Ms. Burnham - food services
Ms. Dawanga - food services

Second Grade Team

Ms. Harmon - 2nd gr teacher *
Ms. Hennessy - 2nd gr teacher
Ms. Brawner - 2nd gr teacher
Ms. Collins - 2nd gr teacher
Ms. Hanrahan - 2nd gr teacher

Daily Permanent Substitute

Ms. Rizvi
Ms. Humayur
Vacancy - Daily Building Sub

Third Grade Team

Ms. Petry - 3rd gr teacher *
Mr. Beaudoin - 3rd gr teacher
Ms. Alhedai - 3rd gr teacher
Ms. O'Brien - 3rd gr teacher

Fourth Grade Team

Ms. Hamilton - 4th gr teacher *
Ms. Varga - 4th gr teacher
Ms. Sloat - 4th gr teacher
Ms. Allen - 4th gr teacher
Ms. McNally - 4th gr teacher

Fifth Grade Team

Ms. Ports - 5th gr teacher *
Mr. Taylor - 5th gr teacher
Ms. Ladd - 5th gr teacher
Ms. Simmons - 5th gr teacher
Ms. Guity - 5th gr teacher

Special Education & Related Services Team

Ms. Schriefer - Spec. Ed. teacher *
Mr. Stark - Spec. Ed. teacher
Ms. Garcia - Spec. Ed. teacher
Ms. Sanders - Spec. Ed. teacher
Ms. Conaway - Spec. Ed. para
Ms. Roberts - Spec. Ed. para
Ms. Smith - Student Assistant
Mr. Cooper - Student Assistant
Ms. Simmons - Speech Language Path.
Ms. Kozcot - Speech Language Path.
Ms. Sisk - Speech Language Path.
Ms. Shanley - Occupational Therapy
Ms. Thomas - Occupational Therapy
Ms. Perillo - Physical Therapy

Lunch/Recess Monitors

Ms. Belgen - Lunch/Recess Monitor
Ms. Wiggins - Lunch/Recess Monitor
Ms. Drabic - Lunch/Recess Monitor
Vacancy - Lunch/Recess Monitor

**Instructional Team Leader*