

Information about upcoming Lower Elementary classroom changes at Morehead

The Morehead Montessori PTA is providing this guide to share information with all Morehead families about upcoming Lower Elementary classroom changes at Morehead.

Overview

- A new law passed by the NC General Assembly requires our school to make changes to the Lower EL classrooms (1st– 3rd grades) in the next few weeks.
- To comply with the law, two classes will get bigger and will be co-taught by the current classroom teacher and an additional certified, licensed teacher. Two classes will get smaller and have one licensed teacher and one instructional assistant.
- The PTA is committed to working with Principal Webb to do everything possible to ensure this transition is as smooth and successful is possible, given the difficult circumstances.

The Details

Morehead is required to meet an NC General Assembly (NCGA) Student-Teacher Ratio Mandate

- With the passage of House Bill 13 (HB13), the NCGA legally required all public schools in NC, including Morehead, to have an average teacher-student ratio of 1 to 20 for K, 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades. The NCGA provided no additional money to schools or districts for this requirement.
- Durham Public Schools (DPS) requested a waiver from this mandate for Morehead and was denied.
- All public school in the state are required to meet this new mandate by Fall 2017 and Morehead has been exploring all options with DPS. Other schools are struggling to find ways to meet this requirement, too.
- Morehead will meet this requirement 1) by changing the size of the Lower EL classrooms and 2) with staffing changes. This solution will:
 - Minimize the total number of students that have to make a classroom transition mid-year.
 - Allow Morehead to keep dedicated classrooms for Art and Music.
 - Maintain the high quality of education at Morehead.
 - Ensure that no current teachers lose their jobs.

Morehead's plan for addressing the teacher-student ratio mandate

- Two classrooms (Best, Botts) will increase in size to 32 students and be co-taught by two certified, licensed teachers.
 - Co-teaching involves both teachers sharing responsibility for overseeing all aspects of the classroom, including assessment, planning and teaching lessons for all children in the class.
- Two classrooms (Arnold, Jackson) will decrease in size to 22 students and will continue to have one certified, licensed teacher and one instructional assistant.
 - The teachers will continue to be solely responsible for overseeing the classroom.
- These changes will require 11 students to move and start in their new classrooms on November 27th (the Monday after Thanksgiving). Parents of children who will be moving should have received notification from the school in a letter sent home in their child's folder.

School and district supports for the transition

- There will be a Lower EI-wide transition ceremony on Tuesday, November 21st to allow the students who are moving to say good-bye to their old classroom and to be welcomed by their new classroom.
- DPS is providing professional development and other support to the new co-teaching teams, including a full day for planning.
- Morehead has access to on-going assistance from an American Montessori Society consultant to help with maintaining the integrity and balance of our public school Montessori programming during this transition.
- Ms. Webb is available for meetings to discuss questions or concerns with families. Contact Ms. Webb to set up a meeting.

Timeline for implementation of classroom changes

November 15 – Ms. Botts returns from maternity leave

November 20 – Staffing shifts occur and “re-open” house from 4-5pm for all Lower EI families to become acquainted with the new classrooms

November 21 – Transition Ceremony in the gym

November 27 – Students’ first day in their new classrooms

December 4 – PTA Board meeting at the school starting at 6:30pm – open to all

Week of December 11— Morehead PTA president Anna Gassman-Pines will hold office hours for any family wishing to talk about this or any other issue. Call Anna at 215-498-2807 to set up a meeting.

Who to contact with questions or concerns

Principal Cynthia Webb – cynthia.webb@dpsnc.net; 919-560-3954

Melissa Watson, Interim Executive Director of Elementary Teaching, Learning and Leadership, Durham Public Schools – melissa.watson@dpsnc.net; 919-560-2505

CURRENT LOWER EL TEACHER ASSIGNMENT and CLASSROOM SIZE

ARNOLD Muckelvene (27)	BEST (25)
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BOTTS Price (28)	JACKSON Cates * (28)
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FUTURE LOWER EL TEACHER ASSIGNMENT and CLASSROOM SIZE

ARNOLD Muckelvene (22)	BEST / RICKARD (32)
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BOTTS / RIVERS * (32)	JACKSON Price (22)
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Key: **LICENSED TEACHER** / **Instructional Assistant**

* Ms. Cates will move from Ms. Jackson's class to Ms. Faggart's primary class. Ms. Rivers will move from Ms. Faggart's primary class and become a licensed co-teacher with Ms. Botts.