



Virginia-Highland Elementary
774 Virginia Avenue | Atlanta, GA 30306

Mr. Terry Harness, *Principal*
Mrs. Laura Dostie, *Assistant Principal*

July 1st, 2024

Welcome to the 2024 - 2025 school year! Words cannot express how excited and happy I am to welcome our returning and new students to Virginia-Highland Elementary on August 1st. This summer has been a whirlwind of renovations, new additions, cleaning and planning. I am confident that our hard work has paid off.

We have gone to great lengths to ensure that our school will be an engaging and rewarding place for all students that supports your child's emotional, intellectual, physical, and social well-being. As principal, I look forward to working with the best students, teachers, staff, parents, guardians, and community within Atlanta Public Schools.

At VHE you can anticipate the continuation of many Midtown Cluster Elementary initiatives, such as: providing high-quality STEAM education through the integration of content areas & incorporation of our Design Thinking Process.

- Empathize - Understanding the needs and perspectives of others
- Define - Define the problem or challenge they want to address
- Ideate - Brainstorm and generate ideas to solve the identified problem
- Prototype - Create a physical or digital prototype of their ideas
- Test - Test their prototype and gather feedback from others
- Iterate - Students repeat previous steps as needed

We will also strive to provide students with project-based learning, personalized learning, research-based literacy (Science of Reading) instruction & explicit phonics instruction using an Orton-Gillingham approach.

The emotional well-being of our students is very important and we will continue to support them by incorporating Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and the five core competencies into our daily instruction.

- Self – Awareness – “I know who I am.”
- Self – Management – “I take care of myself.”
- Social Awareness – “I care about others.”
- Responsible Decision Making – “I am a problem solver.”
- Relationship Skills – “I am a good friend.”

Please take a moment to check out the announcements listed below.

Celebrating 100 Years

Did you know that our school building turned 100 years old in 2024? Virginia-Highland Elementary was originally built in 1924 and was named after Samuel Martin Inman, a cotton merchant from Tennessee. Through the years, the school has been renovated and new editions to the facility were added. In 1978, the elementary school was converted into a middle school. In the 2023/24 school year, the building made its official return to an elementary school with the opening of Virginia-Highland Elementary. Join us this year as we celebrate our school building turning 100 years old. #VHE100





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Bell Schedule

All APS Elementary Schools will operate on a 7:45 am – 2:15 pm bell schedule. (Students may arrive at 7:15am) Please note that afternoon dismissal is earlier this year in comparison to the last three years in Atlanta Public Schools. The change in dismissal time is a result of the loss of CARES funding that was provided to bridge the academic gaps created by the COVID19 pandemic.

- 7:15 am: Student arrival begins.
- 7:45 am: Instruction begins. Students arriving after this time are marked tardy.
- 2:15 pm: Dismissal begins.

I ask that you do all you can to ensure that students arrive to school on time each day, ready to learn. Keep in mind, students who arrive tardy regularly are missing out on vital instruction throughout the day. Let's make sure our kids start their day on the right foot.

Getting to and from School & On-Site After School Childcare

Walking & Biking - Environmental and physical wellness are also very important to us. We want to encourage families who can walk or bike to school to do so. Walkers and bikers are welcome to enter through the bus or main entrance. We will allow 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students (with parent permission) to walk or bike home in the afternoon. We will also allow older siblings to walk younger siblings home with parent permission.

- **Carpool** - Carpool drop off/pick up is located off the main entrance off Virginia Avenue. We will begin welcoming children at 7:15am and loading children at 2:25 pm.
- **Bus** - To reduce pollution and traffic, we encourage VHE families with bus routes to consider placing your child on the bus in the morning. Bus route information including bus routes, arrival and drop-off times can be found on our school website.
- **On-Site After School Childcare** - Are you in need of on-site childcare? Click the link to learn about VHAS (Virginia-Highland After School) and to register your child. [VHAS Information & Registration](#)
- More Information can be found on our website. [Morning Arrival & Afternoon Dismissal](#)

Transportation Management

At VHE, we will use an after-school dismissal app called "PikMyKid". This app will be used to make all dismissal transportation changes. Parents/Guardians will also use this app to announce your arrival at school via carpool or parent pick-up. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to use the PikMyKid app instead of calling/emailing the main office or calling/emailing the teacher. The app is available for download in your phone's app store. Instructional guides for use are located on our school website under "Parent Connect". Click here for [PikMyKid App Instructions & Information](#).

Teacher Assignments

We will release teacher assignments for grades 1-5 on July 20th through the Infinite Campus Parent Portal. Pre-K & Kindergarten students and those new to APS will receive their teacher assignment at Open House/Sneak Peek and Infinite Campus Parent Portal logins at Open House/Sneak Peek on July 31st.





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[New Teachers at VHE](#)

We have an amazing staff of teachers and instructional paraprofessionals eager to meet you and our VHE OWLS. We want to welcome the following teachers to the VHE family. Click on the link to learn about our new teachers at VHE! [Welcome New VHE Teachers](#)

[Grade Level Departmentalization](#)

At VHE, we departmentalize 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th grade homerooms. Departmentalization means that each of the students in these grade levels will have a homeroom team of two teachers. One teacher will teach Humanities (Reading, Social Studies, Writing) and the other teacher will teach STEAM (Math, Science, Writing). One of these two teachers will be the primary homeroom teacher. Departmentalization allows our teachers to focus their time and planning on a content area that they are passionate about. The teachers become experts and our students get to benefit from that expertise. Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten and 1st grade students will have one homeroom teacher who teaches all content.

[GO Team \(School Governance\) Meeting](#)

VHE will have its first GO Team meeting on **July 17th at 2pm** on Zoom. It will also stream live on Facebook. For more information on our GO Team click the link. [GO Team Information](#)

[New Parent/Guardian Orientation](#)

It is important that we do all we can to ensure that all families know how things will work at Virginia-Highland Elementary. With that said, we hope that we will see you at our New Parent/Guardian Orientation where I will take you through a day in the life of a VHE Owl. We highly recommend that Pre-K, Kindergarten & any new student regardless of grade level attend our New Parent/Guardian Orientation on **July 31st at 8am** in the VHE Auditorium. Parents/Guardians will enter through the Auditorium entrance located at the corner of Virginia Avenue and Park. New Parents/Guardians will then be able to attend our Open House/Sneak Peek at 9am where you can meet your child's teacher.

[Open House/Sneak Peek](#)

Open House is on Wednesday, July 31st from 9:00 am – 11:00 am. This is for all VHE students and families to experience walking to your child's class, meeting your child's teachers, and saying hello to classmates. Please enter through the VHE main entrance located on Virginia Avenue. At Sneak Peek you will be able to do the following:

- Collect homeroom teacher assignment and meet/chat briefly with your child's teacher
- Drop off school supplies (if you purchased an Edukit, don't forget to bring it with you and drop it off with your child's teacher) Click the link to access our school supply lists. [School Supply Lists](#)
- Receive transportation information (bus, carpool, walker information)
- Receive Infinite Campus Parent Portal Login information
- Purchase VHE spirit wear
- Sign-up for "VHE After School Daycare" and After School Clubs/Organizations





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VHE PTO

The VHE PTO works closely with school administration and staff to enrich the environment and culture of VHE to provide equitable access to excellent education for all students. We invite all VHE parents/guardians to become an active part of this vision by supporting fundraising efforts, volunteering, and becoming PTO members. We hope you will consider donating to the PTO for the 2024.2025 school year. All funds donated this school year will go towards supporting our 2024.25 students at VHE. You can donate directly to the PTO by visiting the VHE website under PTO > Giving. The suggested donation per child is \$250, but the PTO understands that every dollar helps. Your donations will be used to support curriculum, technology, infrastructure, teacher & student resources and to provide opportunities for our students and families to come together to celebrate our school, our teachers, and our community. [Join & Donate to the PTO](#)

Membership Toolkit

Membership Toolkit is a PTO-run tool that is a free, members-only community that is available to current parents/guardians and staff only. Membership Toolkit connects our school community with PTO initiatives like fundraising, volunteer opportunities, directories, and communications.

Through Membership Toolkit:

- join the PTO and pay annual dues
- subscribe to VHE's weekly NeighborHoot newsletter
- connect with volunteer opportunities
- view the VHE Family Directory (with active PTO membership)

To join Membership Toolkit, click on the link and follow the instructions provided. [Join Membership Toolkit](#)

Volunteers

We need volunteers to help get our school and teacher's classrooms ready by August 1st. To volunteer, you must join membership toolkit. Once you have joined, you will be able to sign up for volunteer opportunities. Thank you for being generous with your time and volunteering at VHE. Click this link for [Volunteer Opportunities](#).

VHE PTO - Back to School Night

Back to School Night is scheduled for Thursday, August 22nd from 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm. This event will highlight the wonderful things that our teachers will be teaching throughout the school year, the high level of expectations we will set for our students and ways in which you can support your child and our teachers in their efforts. More information to follow.

For all the latest information, please visit our website regularly, www.virginiahighlandelementary.com and join Membership Toolkit! We are excited to see our VHE Owls soon! As we continue to prepare for the first days of school, we look forward to working with and meeting each of you. Enjoy the last few weeks of summer!

Mr. Terry Harness
Principal

