



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

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

July 3rd, 2025

Hello VHE Families!

Welcome to the 2025 - 2026 school year! Words cannot express how excited and happy I am to welcome our returning and new students to Virginia-Highland Elementary on Monday, August 4th. 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, and structured literacy. Our new literacy curriculum, Advanced Benchmark, is a standards-aligned curriculum designed to build literacy skills and knowledge, emphasizing high expectations and achievement for all learners. The program focuses on explicit, systematic, and spiraled instruction, incorporating elements like phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary development.

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.”

There is a lot that you need to know to start the year off on the right foot. Please take a moment to check out the announcements listed below.

New Teachers & Staff at VHE

We are growing! 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 and staff to the VHE family. Click on the link to learn about our new teachers at VHE! [Welcome New VHE Teachers & Staff](#)





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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 instruction begins promptly at 7:45am. 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.

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

Dismissal begins at 2:15pm each day. Dismissal is our busiest time of day as we do all we can to ensure that students arrive home safely. Keep in mind that dismissal during the first day of school will go slowly and methodically as we teach students our dismissal routine. We ask our parents & guardians for patience as we reacclimate ourselves to the school day schedule.

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 entrance or main entrance. We will allow 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students (with parent permission) to walk or bike home independently 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 in cars at 2:20 pm. In the afternoon, we ask that parents please wait on Virginia Avenue until 2:15pm to enter the main parking area for carpool. This allows our fire lane to be car free in the event of an emergency.
- **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 transportation information including bus routes, and arrival and drop-off times can be found on our school website under *Parent Connect*.
- **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. Please understand that our afterschool childcare has a limited number of students who can register. Registration is first come, first serve. [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](#).





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Teacher Assignments

We will release teacher assignments for grades 1-5 on August 1st 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 (8/1). New families will also receive their **Infinite Campus Parent Portal** logins at Open House/Sneak Peek on August 1st.

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 will teach STEAM (Math, Science). 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 23rd at 3pm** 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 to see all new families to VHE 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 **August 1st at 8am** in the VHE Auditorium. Parents/Guardians will enter through the Auditorium entrance located at the corner of Virginia Avenue and Park Drive. 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/Sneak Peek is on Friday, August 1st 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 assignments 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 "VHAS 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 2025.2026 school year. All funds donated this school year will go towards supporting our 2025.26 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](#) (click here)

[Meet the VHE PTO Board](#) (click here)

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](#)

VHE PTO - Back to School Night

Back to School Night is scheduled for Thursday, August 21st 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

