

Columbus Municipal School District

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PARENT INFORMATION LETTER ANNOUNCING EARLY RELEASE WEDNESDAY

TO THE PARENTS OF:

COLUMBUS SCHOOL DISTRICT IS ON ACADEMIC WATCH

It is an honor and a privilege educating your child (ren) in Columbus School District. We have the highest expectations for student learning. We love our students and we are committed to **“providing a quality education for every child.”** Last year (2011) after our students took the state tests, our school district received an accountability rating from the Mississippi Department of Education of **ACADEMIC WATCH**. This rating is near the bottom of the state accountability system. We are disappointed and have a plan to raise achievement over time. To review Columbus School District’s “Believe & Achieve” Strategic Plan, School Calendar, and to print a copy of a School Supply List for your child’s school, please visit www.columbuscityschools.org.

Mississippi and the nation have a system of high stakes testing in place that is directly impacted when students don’t perform well on state tests. This accountability system went into place in 2001 with the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act* by former President George W. Bush. The law basically says that all children must score **PROFICIENT** on state tests by 2014. Unfortunately, Columbus Schools has too many students **who are not proficient**.

If Columbus Schools does not get its achievement level up soon, our school district could be classified a **FAILING** school district by the state and run the risk of being taken over by the state for low test scores. We just saw this happen recently to a neighboring school district, Aberdeen School District. It’s devastating to lose control of your school district due to a state take-over. I am going to do everything I can with the help of parents, teachers, and principals to keep that from happening. We have some great teachers and principals. What we don’t currently have is enough time to give teachers the professional development training they need for the **NEW** Common Core Standards state tests that are coming very soon. (www.corestandards.org)

WE NEED PARENTS COOPERATION FOR EARLY RELEASE WEDNESDAY

As you know up until a few years ago, Columbus School District and Lowndes County School District both were implementing **Early Release Wednesdays** (ERW) to give teachers more time to participate in professional development. Lowndes County continued their ERW program and their student achievement increased to “High Performing,” and Columbus School District stopped ERW several years ago due to administrative changes and our student achievement dropped to “Academic Watch.” Although other factors affect achievement, the data shows that ending ERW in Columbus had a negative impact on our students’ achievement. We apologize to parents and our teachers for discontinuing a program that was clearly helping our children **ACHIEVE**.

The Early Release Wednesday schedule begins August 2012 for Columbus Schools.

EARLY RELEASE WEDNESDAY SCHEDULE FOR PARENTS		
Cook, Fairview, Franklin, Sale & Stokes-Beard	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday Daily Schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School Day Begins at 7:30 A.M. ▪ School Day Ends at 3:00 P.M. ▪ For Car Riders & Buses
Cook, Fairview, Franklin, Sale & Stokes-Beard	Early Release Wednesday Schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School Day Begins at 7:30 A.M. ▪ School Day Ends at 12:45 P.M. ▪ For ERW Car Riders/Buses Load 12:45 – 1:00 P.M. ▪ ERW Professional Development for Teachers
Columbus Middle School	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday Daily Schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School Day Begins at 7:45 A.M. ▪ School Day Ends at 3:38 P.M. ▪ For Car Riders & Buses
Columbus Middle School	Early Release Wednesday Schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School Day Begins at 7:45 A.M. ▪ School Day Ends at 12:15 P.M. ▪ For ERW Car Riders/Buses Load 12:15 – 12:30 P.M. ▪ ERW Professional Development for Teachers
Columbus High School	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday Daily Schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School Day Begins at 7:45 A.M. ▪ School Day Ends at 3:38 P.M. ▪ For Car Riders & Buses
Columbus High School	Early Release Wednesday Schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School Day Begins at 7:45 A.M. ▪ School Day Ends at 12:15 P.M. ▪ For ERW Car Riders/Buses Load 12:15 – 12:30 P.M. ▪ ERW Professional Development for Teachers

- *Average length of school day for Mississippi students – 7:30 A.M. – 3:15 P.M. (MDE, 2011)*

Note to Parents: We care. Principals at each school will work closely with parents to assist them in getting their child’s transportation worked out to designated locations in the Columbus attendance area on ERWs if it is different from your home address. We understand parents are working and may require some special assistance. We will adjust our bus routes on Wednesdays as needed for parents who need their child to be dropped off at a different location such as a grandparents’ home, the Boys & Girls Club, or other after school locations. Each principal will give parents a list of daycares with van services for their after school program.

A special Re-Registration Day will be held Tuesday, July 24, 2012 from 7:30 A.M – 5:30 P.M. at your child’s school. At re-registration, parents will pick up their child’s schedule, meet teachers, and receive bus assignments and lunch applications for the coming school year. At this time, parents can also meet with their child’s principal to discuss any changes they need in transportation for Early Release Wednesdays. Our **TEACHERS** need parental support as we work together to better prepare our students for success on state tests.

This letter is being sent to **PARENTS EARLY** in the summer to give you time to make arrangements for your child’s after school schedule for **Early Release Wednesdays**. We ask for your cooperation as our teachers, principals and central office team work together to raise student achievement for all our children. Thank you in advance for your cooperation. By working together, our students will be much more prepared for state testing in the future.

Sincerely,

Dr. Martha Liddell

Superintendent of Education

Mother of Benjamin, First Grader in Columbus School District