

August 2, 2019

Dear Rachel Carson Middle School Students and Families,

On behalf of the entire RCMS staff, I am honored to welcome you to the 2019-2020 school year. We hope you have had a restful and enjoyable summer where fond memories were made. It is always fun to hear about what our students experience when they are away from school.

To our new 7<sup>th</sup> grade students, we are thrilled to meet you and look forward to you joining us at Carson. You will be a part of our community and bring new perspectives and ideas that will enhance our community immensely. As for our 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, your presence and leadership are so important to our ongoing success as a school and we look forward to your ability to lead by example in what it means to be a Carson Panther.

In a few short weeks, we will begin a new year of school with a new theme. This year's theme, *Our World, Our Journey*, offers us inspiration as we look forward to the possibilities that lie ahead. The idea that we are a part of a global community has been an important thread in our school's fabric for many years. This theme asks us to consider perspectives of the individuals that we encounter every day. At Carson, we often ask students to consider how their actions can make a positive impact on their surrounding world. Moreover, the process of learning is often a journey, where we seek to answer questions and make new discoveries. Through a variety of academic and extracurricular learning opportunities, we strive to help students grow and prosper during their two years in middle school.

Additionally, we are proud to share Carson's revised vision and mission. A school vision is a statement of what we are striving to become. A school mission offers statements of how we will achieve this vision. Last spring, our staff collaborated and worked collectively to refine our values into guiding principles that serve as markers to our ongoing journey as a school.

#### Rachel Carson Middle School's Vision and Mission

- It is our vision at RCMS to be an inclusive and respectful community of lifelong learners.
- At RCMS, we have a mission to:
  - Model respect and empathy as we embrace diversity
  - Provide all students with engaging, authentic opportunities
  - Teach 21<sup>st</sup> century skills
  - Foster resilience
  - Inspire a sense of wonder

These statements will direct our decisions and actions as we help all members develop their talents and skills to achieve their potential.

For a number of years, we have engaged in a bonding opportunity through the reading of our OneBook. The OneBook is a novel that connects with our annual school theme and is read

by all students and staff members. This experience provides many opportunities for a common understanding and supports conversations around relevant themes throughout the school year. Our OneBook for this year is *Refugee* by Alan Gratz. *Refugee* is a historical fiction book detailing the journeys of three different young people at three different points in history. This novel will provide all of us a chance to learn about extraordinary circumstances faced by people around the world. It will also allow for us to discuss the themes that can unite people despite the different hardships they may face. This year brings a change in how we will read this novel. We will read the OneBook together during our Panther Time block, allowing for reflection and conversations about these incredible stories.

We look forward to seeing you and building our connections with you as we approach the start of school. There are several methods to access information about our school.

- The RCMS website. Our website provides comprehensive information about our instructional program, staff contact information, dates to remember, and other pertinent information. Please visit us at: <https://carsonms.fcps.edu>
- We send weekly News You Choose e-mail messages. These messages offer a snapshot of the upcoming days and weeks. To sign-up, please scroll to the bottom of our website and click the “Sign Up Now” button.
- The RCMS Twitter feed. This provides a glimpse into the daily activities and successes of our students and staff. Follow us on Twitter: @RachelCarsonMS

Additionally, there are several important dates to make sure are on your calendars for the start of the new year.

- **Our 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Panther Palooza.** This will occur on Thursday, August 22 from 9AM – 2PM. All students and families are invited to school to drop off important forms, obtain your class schedule, and gather other important information. Please see our upcoming News You Choose announcements for more details.
- **New Student Orientation.** This occurs on Friday, August 23, from 9-11AM. All 7<sup>th</sup> grade students and 8<sup>th</sup> graders new to RCMS are invited to attend the orientation. Here, you take part in a whole group welcome and you will do a “walkthrough” of your schedule and meet your teachers. This event is only for our students. Transportation will be provided from your neighborhood elementary school. Details on the bus timing will be provided in the coming weeks.
- **First Day of School:** Monday, August 26
- **7<sup>th</sup> Grade Back to School Night:** Thursday, August 29 from 7-8:30 PM
- **Labor Day holiday weekend (student holidays):** Friday, August 30 and Monday September 2<sup>nd</sup>
- **8<sup>th</sup> Grade Back to School Night:** Wednesday, September 4, 7-8:30 PM

In setting our sights on the new year, two ideas from our vision and mission clearly stand out: community and a sense of wonder. Please know that every student and their family are members

of this community. We value your voice and look forward to our ongoing connections with you. As you become acquainted with your teachers, school counselor, administrator, and other staff members, please let us know how we can best assist you throughout the school year. We also ask that students bring their sense of wonder to school. We want you to ask big questions and have new experiences. As a staff, we will create many ways to challenge your thinking and open new horizons in a supportive and positive manner. Together, we will have an exciting journey through the 19-20 school year.

Enjoy the final weeks of summer. We will see you very soon. Go Panthers!

Sincerely,

Gordon Stokes  
Principal