

# **GREAT MEADOWS MONTHLY**

VOL. 1 – SEPT. 2025

## **Back to School Edition**

**WELCOME TO THE 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR!**

**WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU FOR THE FIRST WEEK OF SCHOOL!**

- **SEPTEMBER 1ST- SCHOOL CLOSED**
- **SEPTEMBER 2ND – EARLY DISMISSAL (GMMS – 12:15; CENTRAL – 1:10)**
- **SEPTEMBER 3RD – EARLY DISMISSAL**
- **SEPTEMBER 4TH – FULL-DAY SCHEDULE**



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## **BACK TO SCHOOL CHECKLIST:**

- **FILL OUT BACK TO SCHOOL FORMS ON REALTIME**
- **WRITE DOWN BUS PICK-UP AND DROP-OFF TIMES**
  - **MAKE A PLAN FOR PICK UP AND DROP OFF!**
- **CHECK THE SUPPLY LIST ON THE WEBSITE**
- **VISIT THE PARENT PORTAL AND ADD FUNDS TO YOUR LUNCH ACCOUNT**
- **LIKE AND FOLLOW: [WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/@GREATMEADOWSREGIONAL](https://www.youtube.com/@GREATMEADOWSREGIONAL)**

## A NOTE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT...



Dear GMRSD Families:

Welcome to the 2025-2026 school year! I hope everyone had a restful and happy summer and that you share my excitement for the year ahead. I look forward to welcoming our students back into the halls of Central Elementary and Great Meadows Middle School on September 2, when our newest preschoolers, our veteran 8<sup>th</sup> graders, and everyone in between will all experience that “first day of school” feeling (even the grown-ups).

One reason to feel enthusiastic for the upcoming school year is that GMRSD has added five new teaching positions, an additional school counselor, and a part-time speech therapist to its staff. In partnership with the Independence Township Police Department, there will also be a Class III Officer coming to provide additional security to the school campus in the coming months. Additionally, the district has hired Ms. Loren Marcus as the Supervisor of Special Services/School Psychologist. Ms. Marcus arrives with many years of experience in the same roles at North Warren Regional. As a result of these additions, we are able to avoid increased class sizes, provide additional academic and social-emotional support to students, and ensure our students receiving special education services are getting everything they need.

Every summer, the district sets a few specific goals for the coming year that are measured and that align with the daily goals of providing the best learning environment for all students. Two of this year's goals focus on academic achievement and inclusive education, similar to goals from the 2024-2025 school year. The third goal is to enhance and improve communication. To that end, be on the lookout for a new district website, set to launch in early to mid-September. A contest to create a district motto for the website will be generated and sent to staff and students at the start of the school year. A monthly district newsletter is being developed that will go out at the end of every month, starting September 30. This is in addition to any school-based newsletters that are shared by the principals. Lastly, we are in the process of creating a variety of interactive events – virtually and in-person – that encourage staff, parent, and student participation, starting with our new District YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/@GreatMeadowsRegional>). The first of these will be the first GMRSD Town Hall, a virtual event scheduled for Wednesday, August 27 at 6 p.m. More details will be available closer to the date.

Every school year's beginning is a time of unlimited possibilities. It is a team effort for 180 days to help our children grow into lifelong learners and the leaders of tomorrow. Welcome back!

Sincerely,  
Michael Mai  
Superintendent/Director of Special Services

# NEW STAFF...



## JOHN CHAMPION

My name is John Champion and I will be a School Counselor at Great Meadows Middle School. I am a certified NJ K-12 school counselor and work in private practice on the side as a Licensed Professional Counselor. I have been a counselor for 10 years working in both public and private schools. I am excited to join the dedicated staff at Great Meadows and most importantly, work with the students and families to foster a learning environment centered around academic, social, and emotional success! It's a privilege to be here!



## BELLA MESSINA

I am beyond excited to begin in September at Great Meadows Middle School, as it will be my first official year of teaching! I have just graduated from Ramapo College of New Jersey this past summer in Elementary Education and am currently undertaking my Master's Degree in Special Education as well. I'm most excited to immerse myself in the welcoming community of Great Meadows School District. Along with that, I'm also looking forward to engaging with the school community for an adventurous school year in extracurriculars and more! I love being creative and incorporating arts and music into the classroom, so I'm truly excited to see what this year will bring!



## JESSE ADAMS

I am excited to join the GMRSD family as a Health and Physical Education teacher, bringing seven years of experience in the field. In addition to teaching, I have coached both volleyball and basketball, helping students grow through teamwork and discipline. My passion lies in supporting students as they develop lifelong healthy habits through dynamic and engaging instruction. I look forward to becoming an active part of the GMRSD community and contributing to the success and growth of every student I teach.



## HANNAH MELE

Hi, my name is Hannah Mele, and I am excited to join Central Elementary School as one of the speech-language pathologists this year. I completed both my Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in Speech-Language Pathology at William Paterson University. I look forward to collaborating with teachers, staff, and families to help students develop their speech and language skills. In my free time, I enjoy reading, baking, hiking, and swimming.



## HAILEY DRESSEL

My name is Hailey Dressel and I am a 3rd year teacher. I graduated from Rutgers University with my Master's Degree in Elementary Education. I have taught preschool, 2nd grade and now kindergarten this year! In my free time, I enjoy spending time with my dog Lincoln and watching the Philadelphia Eagles. I am very excited to start my journey here at Great Meadows Regional School District this year and looking forward to a great school year!



## KATHY VANDERVALK

My name is Kathy Vandervalk and this is my first year teaching at Central Elementary. I have been teaching for 10 years plus in all different grades but my first love is preschool. I am very excited to start the school year and be part of the preschool team. In my free time, I love spending time with my husband and daughter.



# NEW STAFF...



## LOREN MARCUS

I have been an educator for seventeen years, serving the past five years consecutively as a Supervisor of Special Education and School Psychologist. During this time, I created multiple specialized programs designed to provide students with the support they need to remain in their home school district. I am deeply passionate about ensuring that all students make progress and experience success. Looking ahead, I strive to build a strong community rooted in open communication and a trusting relationship between the Child Study Team and families.



## MAEGAN HUMMELL

Hi, my name is Maegan Hummel, and I am excited to begin my first year as a preschool teacher in the district. I graduated from Centenary University and have three years of experience as a preschool assistant teacher at Liberty Learning Center. I have always known I wanted to be a teacher. I am passionate about helping young learners grow and succeed. I believe the classroom should be a welcoming place where every child feels safe, supported, and excited to learn. Outside the classroom, I enjoy traveling, baking, and spending time with friends/family. I am really looking forward to an amazing school year.



## ROCCO DECORSO

My name is Rocco Decorso and I am a new speech therapist at Great Meadows Middle School. I earned my Master's degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders from Montclair State University. I've had the opportunity to work with learners of all ages, from preschoolers to adults. I'm passionate about supporting our students and love celebrating the progress they make every day.



## KAYLEN SUMMER

I studied at Rutgers University and have experience working in both education and public service, which has shaped my ability to connect with and support students. I am so excited to be part of the GMMS community and to contribute to a positive, engaging learning environment. This year, I'm most looking forward to building strong relationships with my students and helping them grow both academically and personally!! Looking forward to a great year!!!



## JONATHAN SHERMAN

"I'm Mr. Sherman and I've worked as a soccer coach and as a paraprofessional in elementary school special education. I am so excited to be working at GMMS and getting to teach the wonderful kids who go here, as well as work with the very supportive staff! I am most looking forward to getting to know everyone better, and creating so many memories together."



## JAMIE DELANEY

Hello, my name is Jamie Delaney and I am looking forward to my first year at Great Meadows School District. I grew up in Hope, NJ and currently live in Phillipsburg. I graduated from East Stroudsburg University and have 20 years experience teaching children from preschool up to 4th grade. I have spent the last 9 years working with preschool and creative curriculum. I love teaching and helping young minds flourish. I have always been crafty and love trying and making new things. I think that being a creative person is one of the greatest things I can bring into the classroom. I believe that children learn in many ways and being hands on is so important for young children. Personally I love crafting, baking, reading and good coffee. I am excited and looking forward to a wonderful school year.



## BUSINESS OFFICE BLURB

Welcome Back from the Business Office!

As we begin a new school year, the Business Office extends a warm welcome to all of our families—both new and returning! We look forward to partnering with you to support your child's educational journey. This summer, our staff was hard at work preparing for the start of the school year. We also completed the first phase of the HVAC project at GMMS. Please keep an eye out for important updates throughout the year regarding our breakfast and lunch program, transportation and more. Should you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out—we're here to help. Wishing you and your student a smooth and successful start to the year!

Warm regards,

The Business Office Team:

Samantha Westberg, School Business Administrator

Marc Desrosiers, Supv. of B&G

Jessica DeNicola, Accts. Payable

Breanne Schick, HR/Payroll

## CST CORNER

Many positive changes are coming to the GMRSD Child Study Team for 2025-26. For starters, Ms. Loren Marcus has been hired as the new Supervisor of Special Services and School Psychologist. Ms. Marcus has over 17 years' experience working on schools and is entering her sixth year as a Supervisor.

Joining Ms. Marcus among the new faces are Speech Therapists Ms. Hannah Mele (Central) and Mr. Rocco Decorso (GMMS). Ms. Mele and Mr. Decorso will work with Ms. Katie Tackaberry to help all of our students requiring speech and language services.

With these changes comes a change to case management responsibilities:

Ms. Lisa Burn (Social Worker) - Preschool through Grade 2

Ms. Crystal Merritt (LDTC) - Grades 3 through 6 and out-of-district students

Ms. Loren Marcus (Psychologist) - Grades 6 through 8 and HS liaison

We look forward to a year of collaboration, communication, and growth. Welcome back!



## CENTRAL SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT

Dear Central Families,

Welcome back! I hope you all had a fun, healthy summer filled with wonderful memories. Here at Central, we have been very busy preparing for the new school year and are excited to welcome everyone back. The building has been bustling with teachers setting up their classrooms and getting ready for students.

We are thrilled to introduce a few new teachers to our staff this year. In addition, we've expanded with an extra section of Kindergarten, 2nd grade, and preschool to better support our growing community.

We're also excited to launch *Watch D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students)*—a program that invites fathers and father figures into our school to assist with daily activities and support students. More information will be shared at Back-to-School Night on September 18th.

Every Friday, we encourage all students and staff to show their Great Meadows school spirit by wearing spirit gear!

This year, our school will be focusing on the Character Strong program, which highlights monthly social-emotional concepts. Beginning in October, our first focus will be Kindness.

As always, please be sure to check the Parent Portal regularly and maintain open communication with your child's teacher throughout the year.

We are looking forward to a fantastic year of growth, learning, and community at Central. Thank you for your continued support in making our school a great place for students to learn and thrive!

—Ms. Alison Stiehl, Principal

## MIDDLE SCHOOL MESSAGE

As the summer winds down, the energy and excitement for the new school year are building here at the middle school. We are working diligently to prepare for the upcoming 2025-2026 school year, ensuring that everything is in place for a smooth and successful start. I want to extend a special thanks to our exceptional custodial staff and main office team, who have been working tirelessly all summer to ensure our building is pristine and ready for the first day for both students and staff. Their dedication is the foundation of our readiness.

Our incredible teaching staff has also been hard at work, meticulously planning their curriculum and preparing engaging lessons for the year ahead. We are also thrilled to welcome new staff members to our building, who are highlighted in the district newsletter. Each new educator brings a fresh wave of excitement and a commitment to academic readiness that will greatly benefit our students. A very special shout-out goes to Michael Izzo, who has been dedicating his time and effort to rejuvenating our school gardens as part of his Eagle Scout project. The transformation in the back of the building is truly remarkable, and we are so grateful for his contribution.

I am eagerly looking forward to welcoming all of you back to the halls and classrooms. I can't wait to officially kick off the 2025-2026 school year and embark on another journey of learning and growth together. Please enjoy these last few precious days of summer with your family as we all prepare for a wonderful fall. — Ms. Wendy Flynn, Principal



## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**AUGUST 27: VIRTUAL TOWN HALL #1 @ 6PM**

**SEPTEMBER 2: FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL**

**SEPTEMBER 16: GMMS BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT @ 6PM**

**SEPTEMBER 18: CENTRAL ELEMENTARY BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT @ 6PM**

**SEPTEMBER 19: EARLY DISMISSAL (GMMS-12:15; CENTRAL-1:10)**

**SEPTEMBER 22: FALL PICTURE DAY**

**SEPTEMBER 24: PTO MEETING (8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE PARENTS @ 6:30PM; GENERAL MEETING @ 7PM)**

