

DOGWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - Welcome Back Letter



August 2026

Dear Dogwood Elementary Families,

I hope you enjoyed a wonderful summer! Our team is working hard to make sure we are ready to go for the first day of school and we are excited to make this an amazing school year. In an effort to ensure that our beginning will be a safe, smooth and happy one, please review the following information.

First day of School/School Hours: Wednesday, September 2, 2026. The student day is 9:30-3:35 (Grade K-Gr. 5) and 10:00-3pm (Grade UPK: Note: UPK student pick up will be 2:45-3pm)

Classroom Assignments: Classroom assignments will be provided through the Parent Portal on Monday, August 24th at 10:00 am. Parent Portal information was mailed home for kindergarten and new students via USPS. To ensure that we have the most updated emergency contact information for your child, please verify and/or update all information on our Parent Portal. This must be completed in order for you to view your child's teacher assignment. Please understand that much time and consideration went into developing class assignments in order to have classes that are balanced and conducive to learning. Therefore, there will be no changes to classroom assignments at this time. Parent Portal directions can be found on the [District website](#).

Supply Lists: [Click here](#) for current supply lists. If you cannot get everything on the list, please don't worry. We will make sure students have everything they need. Please be aware that backpacks with wheels are not permitted due to safety concerns.

Supply Drop Off: We invite you and your **K-5** Dogwood student to a self-directed tour of the school to visit your child's classroom, meet the teacher and to drop off school supplies on **Tuesday, September 1st from 11:00 am - 12:00 pm**. **Please note, we have reserved Tuesday, September 1st from **10 am-11am** for students attending the **Special Class Kindergarten and the RISE Kindergarten** for their Supply Drop Off/Meet and Greet as a separate time may be a less overwhelming experience for them. We leave it to you as the parent to choose which session would best suit your child's needs.

If your child will need to take medication during our school day, please drop off the medication on this day and meet with the school nurse. We ask that you arrive no earlier than 11:00 (K-5) or 10am if you have a child in the Special Class K or RISE K and leave by 12:00 because our teachers will need to attend a 12:30 faculty meeting immediately following the Supply Drop Off/Meet and Greet. Building maps and a Teacher Roster will be available for your tour on the desk in the Main lobby of our school.

Please note, if you have a child attending **UPK at Dogwood, they will also have their supply drop off on Tuesday, September 1st from 9am-10am** Information about this event will be sent via SCOPE and/or your child's UPK teacher.

Child Nutrition Update: We are happy to announce that the district will be providing free breakfast and lunch meals to all students attending school in the 2026-2027 school year. This service is made possible through the NYS Universal Free School Meal program. Each student will be entitled to one free breakfast meal and one free lunch meal during the scheduled times and can continue to purchase second meals, snacks, additional drinks, or other "a la carte" items with cash, check, or with money on their accounts. Please see the following attachments for frequently asked questions, September menus, and free/reduced meal applications. Please feel free to reach out to the Smithtown Child Nutrition Department at 631-382-5500 or jfrabizio@smithtown.k12.ny.us for any specific questions or concerns you may have. [September 2026 Elementary Menu.pdf](#) [Parent Letter Disabilities 2026-2027](#)

[Household Income Form 2026-2027](#) [Household Income Form Spanish](#) [POV 2 Parent 2026-2027 Letter](#) [POV 2 Parent Letter Spanish](#)

Attached you will find the [Dogwood Parent/Student Handbook](#) that contains pertinent information about our school. Additional back to school information is located on our [Dogwood website](#) for your reference. If you have any questions or concerns please don't hesitate to contact me via email at rcarpenter@smithtown.k12.ny.us or by phone 631-382-4255.

I look forward to a productive and promising year for your children and our students. I will be on the lookout for their smiling faces as they start the new school year! Enjoy these last days of summer and I will see you soon!

Sincerely,

Renee Carpenter, Principal

Dogwood Elementary School Back to School Information

Arrival and Dismissal Information:

When dropping off students in the morning or picking them up in the afternoon, please pull up along the curb in front of our school. In order to keep traffic moving and to avoid congestion on Dogwood Drive, we ask parents to stay in their cars during drop off and pick up times. We have staff outside on bus duty to assist children with getting in and out of cars. They will help students with putting on their backpacks and closing car doors. Students should exit via the door closest to the sidewalk/curb and faculty members will make sure they enter the building safely. Please do not pull around the car in front of you but wait to be waved on by school personnel.

The school day ends at 3:35. Understandably, it takes us a week or so to get students familiar with dismissal procedures but once we do, it runs smoothly. If your child is going to be a walker on a given day, please send a note to the teacher in the morning. You may then meet your child at 3:25 at the gate to the left of our main entrance near the turf if you are walking up to the school.

If you are driving to school to pick up your child for dismissal, **do not arrive at the school or line up on Dogwood Drive prior to 3:20.** We have a UPK program consisting of 3 classes at Dogwood. These UPK children will need to be picked up by parents BEFORE grades K-5 are dismissed. The UPK school day ends at 2:45. UPK parents will need to drive up Dogwood Drive and pull up to the front circle, park and walk to the designated MPR door. If K-5 parents are blocking Dogwood Drive, waiting to enter the gates of the school, this will be a safety hazard and delay dismissal for all students. It also poses a concern for our neighbors on Dogwood Drive as cars tend to idle in front of their homes and block driveways. Please help us safely dismiss students in a timely manner and keep our neighbors happy. If you are picking up your child (K-5) for dismissal via car, do not drive up to the school until 3:20. We will start calling these students to their cars at 3:25.

Pull into the circle in front of the school and school personnel will bring your child to you. Please have your ID ready if asked. If you need to remove your child early from school, please try to do this prior to 2:30. Children being signed out early will be done so at the Greeter's Desk unless they are ill. If this is the case, you may be directed to the Health Office.

Because of our concern for the safety of Dogwood students: No cars may enter the bus circle during arrival or dismissal. The bus circle is the area that is to your left when you enter our main entrance to the school. Parents will also not be permitted on the front walkway areas or where students load/unload buses during morning arrival and dismissal in order to ensure the safety of our students. Thank you for understanding that safety is of our utmost concern.

Bus Safety/Information: Bus information will be sent in a separate mailing from the Transportation Department (631-382-4100). All students should take the bus to which they have been assigned. No child's bus route or stop should be changed without first contacting Mrs. Headrick (631-382-4252) in our Main Office. This will avoid inadvertent overcrowding of the buses. Due to limited space on school buses, we will not be able to have students take different buses to accommodate play dates. As students and the bus drivers adapt to the new school year, buses may arrive at their daily stops a few minutes early or late during the first weeks of school. Please plan to have your child at his/her bus stop at least 10 minutes early in the morning and please do not be alarmed if your child does not arrive at his/her afternoon stop at the exact scheduled time. If your child does not get off the bus at their afternoon stop, please try to remain calm, contact the school to make us aware and remain at the bus stop. We will contact you with further instructions.

If your child will be riding the school bus, please speak to him/her about appropriate bus behavior and safety considerations. When riding the bus, children are expected to remain seated at all times and follow the driver's directions. We encourage students to wear their seatbelts. Please remind your child that school rules apply to all students when they are present on the school grounds and on a school bus. Any form of verbal or physical abuse is strictly prohibited. Any student who violates these guidelines does so at the risk of losing his/her privilege to ride a school bus. Students should sit in grade order from the front of the bus (K) to the back of the bus (grade 5). Older siblings may sit with younger siblings up front, but younger siblings may not sit in the back of the school bus with their older siblings. The bus driver, principal and/or teacher has the right to assign a bus seat to a student if they feel it is necessary to promote a safe bus ride.

Bus/Name Tags: Kindergarten students should wear bus/name tags for the first two weeks of school. This tag was provided at Kindergarten Orientation in the folder provided at that time or you may [click here](#) for a copy of the bus tag. Please write your child's name, grade, teacher's name, room and bus route numbers and bus stop location on their tags. The plastic case

for the bus tag was in the folder given to you at kindergarten screening. If you can't find it, we will give your child another one, simply pin the bus tag on your child for the first day. We suggest that parents of new entrants and grades 1 and 2 also make labels including this information for their child. This will help any staff member to readily assist children to class and to their buses.

Cell Phones/Electronics: In May, 2025 Governor Hochul announced a statewide bell to bell restriction on personal electronic devices in schools across the state in an attempt to create distraction free schools. As a result, the Board of Education has adopted Policy #5695, Students Personal Electronic Devices. Beginning this September, and in accordance with the Governor's order, the use of personal electronic devices by students during the school day anywhere on school grounds is prohibited unless such use is included in a student's Individualized Educational Plan or 504 Plan. Students will be required to turn off or silence all personal electronic devices and store them for the entire school day from the opening bell until dismissal in their backpacks which are placed in their lockers or cubbies. This includes Smart Watches and other electronic devices. Please do not send your child to school with cell phones and electronic devices other than the school issued chromebook. We cannot be responsible for missing or damaged items of this nature. If you need to reach your child during the school day, please contact the Main Office at 631-382-4255.

Chromebooks: All new students including kindergarten students will be receiving a District provided chromebook. Distribution will take place during the first weeks of school. Returning students should have their chromebooks from the last school year. Kindergarten through second graders will have their chromebooks stored at school in a charging cart to be readily available for use. Students in 3rd through 5th grade will keep their chromebooks at home. Teachers will share with you and your child more specific information pertaining to chromebooks and when they will be needed for either classwork or home assignments. Please ask your child to refrain from putting stickers on the school chromebook. These chromebooks are reissued to other students and it takes an excessive amount of time to remove the stickers before it can be given to another student.

Code of Conduct: We are committed to providing a safe and orderly school environment where students may receive and district personnel may deliver quality educational services without disruption or interference. Responsible behavior by students, teachers, other district personnel, parents and other visitors is essential to achieving this goal. Everyone is expected to adhere to the [Smithtown Code of Conduct](#). This can be reviewed on the District website.

Contact Information:

- Principal: Mrs. Renee Carpenter (Email: rcarpenter@smithtown.k12.ny.us)
- Principal's Secretary: Mrs. Maureen Hunstein (Email: mhunstein@smithtown.k12.ny.us)
- Main Office: 631-382-4255
- Nurse: Mrs. Kathleen Siciliano (Email: ksiciliano@smithtown.k12.ny.us)
- Attendance Clerk: Mrs. Jennifer Morello (Email: jmorello@smithtown.k12.ny.us)
- Health /Attendance Office: 631-382-4260
- Transportation Department: 631-382-4100 (8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.)
- Transportation Director: Mary Augugliaro 631-382-4105
- *Town Bus Company (St. James): Big Bus issues: 631-862-2019 (open until 7:00 p.m.)
- *Suffolk Transportation (Ronkonkoma): Mini Bus issues: 631-737-0695 x16 or x17 (open until 7:00 p.m.)

*Use these numbers for any transportation issues after 4:00 p.m. DEL Main Office closes at 4:00 p.m.

Custody: If there are any issues of custody that pertain to your child, please ensure that you provide the school with all legal documentation necessary to enable us to abide by the court's rulings.

Meet the Teacher Night: This will be held on Tuesday, September 29th (Grades K-2 at 6:00-6:45 and Grades 3-5 at 7:00-7:45). This is a time for you to meet your child's teachers and to learn more about the curriculum and grade level expectations. Times, date and format information will be sent home after the start of the school year.

PTA: We encourage you to become involved with the school and become active members of the PTA. The PTA will hold its first meeting of the school year on September 15th at 7:00 p.m. This will be an in person meeting. We try to alternate between a.m. and p.m. PTA meetings each month to give more people an opportunity to attend. Some PTA meetings will be virtual. A link to join any virtual PTA meeting will be provided by the PTA.

[The Smithtown One-Page calendar](#) may be found on both the district and Dogwood website.

Student Monthly Calendar and Parent-Student Handbook: At the beginning of each month, we will be sharing via School Messenger, a student calendar listing important events for Dogwood Elementary. All dates are subject to change. Over the first weeks of school, we ask that you take the time to read the [Dogwood's Parent-Student Handbook](#) which is a good resource for daily expectations, routines and procedures pertaining to our school, cafeteria, classrooms, playground and bus.

Visitors to the Building: For the safety of our students, all parents and visitors who enter the building should report to the Greeter's desk. We work hard to maintain the integrity of our student's educational day; visitors are not permitted in classrooms during the school day without prior arrangement with the teacher. If you'd like to meet with a staff member including the principal, please call the Main Office to make prior arrangements for a mutually convenient time. Please be prepared to show photo ID upon your arrival. Many meetings can be held via Google Meet and can be arranged directly with the teacher.