

August 11, 2024



Message from Ms. Polanco,

I hope all of you are safe, healthy, and excited for the start of the school year! Unity Reed High School staff are ready to start the 2024-25 school year on Monday, August 19th. We will begin on a Maroon Day and students will attend Periods 1, 2, 4 and 6. We are all very excited to welcome back our students!

As we look forward to a year focused on learning and student development, and a positive school culture, I encourage all students to get involved in club, activity, or athletic team. Please read below for important information about the new school year.

#### Important Upcoming Dates:

- **August 15:** "One of Us" New Student Orientation 9am-11:30am, ParentVUE assistance available
- **August 16:** Open House--Come Walk your schedule! 1-3pm, ParentVUE assistance available
- **August 19: First Day of School**
- **August 22:** Back to School Night 6-8pm, ParentVUE assistance available
- **August 23:** Senior Sunrise at 6:00am at the Lions' Stadium

#### UR "One of Us" - New Student Orientation:

We are excited to invite all new students and families to our "One of Us" New Student Orientation on Thursday August 15th from 9:00 AM to 11:30 AM. This event is an opportunity for our new students and families receive a tour of the school from upper class students, receive their schedule, get to meet their administrators and counselors, and learn about clubs, sports and more at our school! Pizza will be provided. Express bus stops will be available to new students only, should families be unable to attend or provide transportation. More information on bus transportation will be forthcoming.

## Class of 2025 - Seniors!

Seniors, this is your year, and graduation day will be here before you know it! The [senior class web page can be found here](#). Please check back frequently to stay up to date on all important senior information.

## Back-to-School Packets:

The Back to School Packet, where parents/guardians can review emergency cards, update contact information, and complete annual policy reviews and acknowledgements, is now available in [ParentVUE](#). All families should complete the Back to School Packet as soon as possible. The information you provide will allow school staff to ensure the safety of your student this school year. To access the Back to School Packet:

- Login to your [ParentVUE](#) account and go to “Online Records” in the top right corner.
- [Written Instructions](#) for completing the Back to School Packet
- If a parent/guardian needs to make changes to information once they submit the Back to School Packet, they can resubmit anytime by following the same instructions provided above.
- If you need assistance, or do not have an active ParentVUE account, please contact our Parent Liaisons or join us for one of our in-person help sessions listed in the important dates section below.
  - Dr. Livia Perez: [perezl@pwcs.edu](mailto:perezl@pwcs.edu), 703-365-2900
  - Ingrid McNealy: [mcnealij@pwcs.edu](mailto:mcnealij@pwcs.edu), 703-365-2900

## Immunization Information Immunization information is available in ParentVUE.

Students must have required immunizations to attend school in PWCS. Check with your school or in [ParentVUE](#) to make sure your students are not missing any required [immunizations](#). If required immunization documentation is not provided, the student will NOT be permitted to start school on Monday, August 19, 2024.

## Recommended School Supplies:

- Notebook paper (college rule, loose leaf)
- Spiral or Composition Notebooks
- Pens and Pencils
- Highlighters
- Plastic BPA-free water bottles; metal water bottles NOT recommended
- Three-ring binders with plastic spines/rings (non-metal).
- Eyeglass cases should be made of hard plastic, not metal

- Note: Supplies needed for specific classes will be provided by your teacher at the beginning of the school year; however, you do not need to purchase the items listed in the syllabus if they are included in the list above.

## Student Schedules

Student schedules will be available through [ParentVUE](#) or [StudentVUE](#) VUE on Wednesday, August 14th. Schedule changes will be extremely limited. Schedules were based on requests made by student last Spring. Students and families verified the course requests with an opportunity to make changes in June. Requests to change due to a change of mind will not be honored. If you believe there is an error in your student's schedule, please contact your child's school counselor. Counselors will be working to fix any errors or issues as quickly as possible. Your patience and understanding are greatly appreciated!

## Bus Assignments

Bus schedules will be available in [ParentVUE](#) or [StudentVUE](#) after August 12. Reminder: Make sure to check your child's bus stop as it may be different than last year. PWCS is consolidating bus stops to help ensure students arrive to school on time. [Read more about transportation improvements in PWCS.](#) Bus schedules for special education, specialty programs, and Independence Nontraditional will be released the week of August 12. Middle and High School class schedules are available in [ParentVUE](#) or [StudentVUE](#) on Wednesday, August 14, 2024.

We encourage you to download the [Here Comes The Bus mobile app](#) that allows you to track your student's bus in real-time. If you have any questions about your child's transportation you may submit a request directly on our Transportation website: [Submit a request – PWCS Transportation](#) or by contacting the Transportation office at 571-402-3940.

As routes are still changing due to new student information received, please check your bus schedule again just prior to the start of school.

## Student Devices

Unity Reed High School will be distributing laptops the first week of school in classes during the school day. Students need to bring their PWCS device to school every day. Please make sure it is fully charged each day before coming to school. Families are encouraged by the county to purchase insurance on their school issued device. The insurance policies are purchased through a third-party vendor. Students who did not return their laptops will not be issued a new device until the previous one is returned.

## Cell Phones and Personal Devices

We believe that a cell phone on a desk or in a pocket provides too tempting a distraction for our students. When the device dings or buzzes, the minds of even the most conscientious students begin to wander. Studies tell us that it can take a brain up to ten minutes to reengage after responding to cell phone distractions. As we have all encountered, phones are not only distractions for their owners but also distractions for teachers and classmates. Governor Youngkin recently issued a ban on cell phone use during the instructional day. All PWCS schools will have restrictions on cell phones beginning on the first day of school. During class, cell phones and smart devices must be out of sight (in backpack or designated classroom cell phone area). Cell phones will not be permitted in school bathrooms. Students are permitted to use cell phones during their lunch. If you need to reach your child for an emergency during the school day, please call the school at 703-365-2900 and we will get the message to your student.

Violations for cell phone use across all PWCS High Schools are as follows:

- **1<sup>st</sup> offense:** Device is surrendered and returned at the end of the class period; student signs acknowledgement form.
- **2<sup>nd</sup> offense:** Device is surrendered, locked in the administrator's office, and returned at the end of the school day. Teacher/staff member notifies the parent/guardian.
- **3<sup>rd</sup> offense:** Device is surrendered and locked in the administrator's office. Student receives a referral and must complete an online module on healthy cell-phone use. Parent/guardian must retrieve the device from the school and sign an acknowledgement of further consequences form.

[In alignment with Governor Glenn Youngkin's Executive Order 33, which aims to establish cell phone-free education in Virginia](#), PWCS will be gathering feedback from this pilot program before finalizing the wireless device guidelines and policy by January 1. [Visit the PWCS Cell Phone and Electronic Device Guidelines webpage for more information.](#)

We appreciate your support in creating a focused, engaging, and safe learning environment for all students.

## Student Drop Off & Parking lot Changes:

To improve traffic flow and enhance safety during arrival and dismissal times, we have made slight adjustments to bus locations, student pick-up and drop-off, and student and staff parking. Students may be dropped off at school starting at 7:00am. The new drop off area ("Kiss and Ride") is now behind the school by way of entering Kim Graham La. Those dropping students off will enter on Kim Graham Ln and drive behind the school to the designated drop-off zone. Please follow the map for exiting on Kim Graham Ln and do not cut through the student parking lot. Please do not drop off in front of the school or near the stadium side. The lanes directly in front of the school are bus lanes. No drivers are allowed in the bus lanes during arrival or dismissal. These areas must remain clear to allow for buses to safely enter and exit.

Underclassmen will enter on Kim Graham Ln and park in their assigned spot in the rear parking lot. Seniors will enter the parking lot in front of the gym from Rixlew lane and park in their designated spot. ALL students must

purchase a parking pass from security in order to park on school grounds. Parking pass information is listed in a separate section below.

Please see the new arrival and dismissal map below.



## Student Entry

Students may enter the building starting at 7:00am through 2 approved entrance doors only. Student entry Doors are:

- Door 1 (Main Entrance) for Buses and Senior Parking
- Door 12 (Near Trailers) for Student Drop Off and Underclass Parking

## Late to School?

After 7:30am, all late students must enter through Door 1 (main entrance) and check in at the main office.

## Parking

Students who plan on driving to school must purchase a parking pass. Parking passes cost \$100. Passes will be sold during the first two weeks of school (August 19 – 30, 2024). Parking enforcement will begin on Tuesday, September 3, 2024. All vehicles, except visitors, parked at school must have a pass displayed at that time.

Seniors now have the exciting opportunity to paint their parking spots in the new senior parking lot area in front of the school by the stadium side. This initiative, inspired by student voice and feedback, aims to foster school pride while simultaneously supporting the beautification of our school campus.

## Attendance Matters!

Attendance is the number one predictor of dropout and on-time graduation rates! Students who need to miss school due to illness or doctor's appointments must provide a note from a parent/guardian for the absence to be excused. Chronic absenteeism significantly impacts a student's GPA and overall school performance. Both excused and unexcused absences contribute to chronic absenteeism. When students are chronically absent, they miss critical instruction time, leading to falling behind academically. Here are some key points:

- Lower GPA: Research shows that chronic absenteeism is associated with lower grade-point averages (GPAs). Students who miss more school days tend to experience a gradual decline in their GPA.
- Early Warning Sign: High numbers of absences, especially in middle school, can serve as an early warning risk indicator for potential dropout. Addressing absenteeism early is crucial to prevent long-term academic consequences.
- Long-Term Effects: Chronic absenteeism correlates with increased rates of high school dropout, adverse health outcomes, and poverty in adulthood.

PWCS utilizes the "[Attention2Attendance](#)" program to alert parents and guardians when absences, both excused and unexcused, become excessive. Students who become chronically absent will be at risk of losing sports and activities participation. As we strive to empower all students, let's prioritize attendance and create a supportive environment for academic success!

You may receive a letter regarding your students' attendance in the mail. Please understand that these notifications are to bring awareness on how much school has been missed this school year. We want to work with you to support your students' consistent daily attendance to drive academic success. If you have questions or feel you may have received a notification in error, please reach out to your student's administrator.

We understand there are unavoidable illnesses or other times when your child should remain at home. We also know that absences add up quickly, and that "showing up" is critical to your child's success in school and in life.

Parents are encouraged to minimize absences during school hours, and to plan family trips and vacations during school holidays. Requests for prearranged absences for longer than one school day, should be for extenuating circumstances and must be submitted in writing your student's administrator within a reasonable time for the school to review, approve, and assign the absence type of excused or unexcused. Click to view the [PWCS 2024-2025 School Calendar](#) and to read more about [PWCS Attendance Guidelines](#).

## Free Breakfast and Lunch for Students

Free meals to all students: Breakfast and lunch will continue to be provided at no cost to students this year due to URHS receiving Title I resources for the 24-25 school year.

## Outside Food/drinks

Students are not permitted to leave campus during the school day, nor use mobile ordering to have food delivered. All orders delivered to school will be discarded with no reimbursement to the student.

## School Counselor & Administrator Assignments:

All students are assigned a school counselor, and an administrator based on their grade-level and last name.

- **School Administrator (By Grade-Level and Last Name):**
  - **9<sup>th</sup> Grade:** Dr. Brooks (Last Names A-L); Ms. Drouin (Last Names M-Z)
  - **10<sup>th</sup> Grade:** Mr. Gillespie (Last Names A-L); Ms. Mathison (Last Names M-Z)
  - **11<sup>th</sup> Grade:** Mr. Hintosh (Last Names A-Z)
  - **12<sup>th</sup> Grade:** Ms. Nash (Last Names A-Z)
  
- **School Counselor (By last name):**
  - **A-Cal:** Mr. Carroll
  - **Cam-Esci:** Mr. Lindenbergg
  - **Esco-Hero:** Ms. Marchetti
  - **Herr-Medl:** Ms. Jefferson
  - **Medo-Per:** Mr. Taylor
  - **Pes-Sanc:** Ms. Goodman
  - **Sand-Z:** Ms. Lewis

## How to stay connected with URHS:

- **Weekly LIONS' ROAR:** This will include the latest updates with pertinent information for the upcoming week and will be emailed to students and families every Sunday. This information will also be posted on our school website.
- **URHS website:** This will be updated more frequently so that we can share the most up to date information with you. In fact, [click here to view our school website](#).
- **School Status:** This is our messaging system, and it allows staff to send text messages, emails, or make phone calls to families. When an email comes to your inbox with this system, the sender will be listed as School Status or Teacher name. A text message will include the staff member's full name in the message but will be a random number. This system allows the recipient to respond directly to a message.
- **The PRIDE Newsletter:** This is a monthly newsletter where we celebrate and highlight the incredible accomplishments of our students, staff, and community at Unity Reed High School. Each month, we will showcase achievements, events, and milestones that make our school proud. Stay tuned for inspiring stories, academic successes, athletic triumphs, and much more. All this information will also be available on our school website for easy access and sharing.

I encourage you to continue to stay in touch with important updates by visiting our website. We are here to support you. Please reach out throughout the school year with any questions, concerns, or to share general feedback, and thank you for being part of our school community, as our ***STRENGTH is IN UNITY!***

Sincerely,

Milagros Polanco

Principal, Unity Reed High School