Dear Parents:

There are only a few more months left in this school year, but we are already busy preparing for the 2015-16 school year. Last year, the Fairfax County School Board approved a recommendation to change start times:

- High schools will start between 8 and 8:10 a.m. and dismiss between 2:45 and 2:55 p.m.
- Middle schools will start at 7:30 a.m. and end at 2:15 p.m.
- The elementary schools window remains unchanged, with elementary school students beginning their day between 8 and 9:20 a.m.

The new bell schedule means that every school will be in session for 6 hours and 45 minutes per day. As a result of the change, Laurel Ridge Elementary School will start a few minutes later than our current bell schedule. **Beginning in September, we will begin at 9:10 a.m. and dismiss at 3:55 p.m.** This change will not impact the programs and services we provide as it is only a five minute shift from our current start time.

Superintendent Garza and the School Board have indicated that the changes to the bell schedules are just a start. They want to work on making adjustments to the middle and elementary school schedules in future years. The transportation team has been performing dry runs of all the bus routes in preparation for next fall. The bus schedules will be sent to families this summer as has been done in previous years.

As background, the School Board adopted a resolution in 2012 to seek solutions that will establish high school start times at 8 a.m. or later. In 2013, they awarded a contract to the Children’s National Medical Center to develop a proposal to achieve the goal. In total, the School Board held six work sessions since June 2012 to discuss the issue. Eight community meetings were held in 2014 during which approximately 1,000 participants shared their opinions on four options. In addition, more than 2,000 comments were gathered from an online feedback form. The School Board voted to approve the recommendation and cited research which demonstrates that school schedules should be aligned with the biological sleep rhythms of adolescents in order to improve their mental and physical health, academic performance, and safety.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

Tonya Cox, Principal