

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
STYLE GUIDE

2023-2024



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INTRODUCTION

Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) is working to ensure that all official written correspondence and publications are consistent with good writing practices and standards, have continuity in thought, organization and design, and follow the style guidelines set forth in the PGCPS Style Guide.

To ensure consistency across the organization, this Guide should be used as a reference when creating letters, emails, publications (electronic or print), presentations and signage that will be shared with the public.

Writing and editing guidelines are based on The Associated Press (AP) Stylebook (55th edition, 2022), with exceptions reflecting common use and preferred styles for PGCPS. The manual will be updated regularly and is available in both print and electronic formats at www.pgcps.org/communications.

Publication, presentation and signage design – whether electronic or printed – should follow the guidelines in this document. They include guidelines for the PGCPS logo, department and program logos, systemic documents (letterheads, business cards, etc.), branding colors and fonts.

The Guide is designed to be user-friendly. If a style question is not covered, use the AP Stylebook as your second reference or contact the Office of Communications with any questions. The AP Stylebook is available by paid annual subscription at www.apstylebook.com. For correct spelling, definitions and word division, visit the Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary online at www.webster.com.

We hope that this guide will help you in producing a quality publication!

THE PGCPS BRAND

Everything we share with stakeholders should reflect the PGCPS “brand.” This brand is defined by our mission, vision and core values as outlined in our strategic plan, Transformation 2026.

Vision

Our vision reflects our desired outcomes for students, staff, schools, community and a broader society:

PGCPS is a culturally responsive school district developing strategic learners, leaders, voices of social justice and advocates for humanity for the world of today, tomorrow and beyond.

Mission

Our mission defines the scope of our work and communicates what we hope to contribute to society:

Provide a transformative educational experience anchored by excellence in equity – developing 21st century competencies and enabling each student’s unique brilliance to flourish in order to build empowered communities and a more inclusive and just world.

CORE VALUES

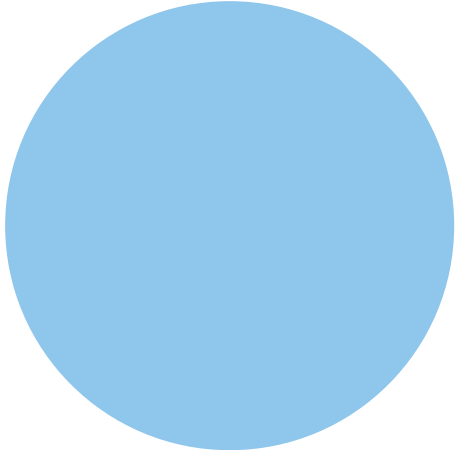
Our core values articulate our key beliefs about students, learning, stakeholder responsibility and the elements necessary to achieve equity and excellence in education:

1. Students are our priority and all students can achieve at high academic levels.
2. Families, students and educators share the responsibility for student success.
3. High expectations inspire high performance.
4. All staff share the responsibility for a safe and supportive school environment contributing to excellence in education.
5. The support of everyone in our community is essential to the success of our schools and students, and this success enriches our community.
6. Continuous improvement in teaching, leadership and accountability is the key to our destiny.

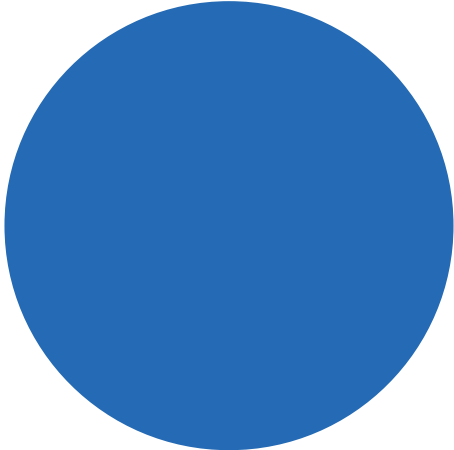
COLOR

To give our branding efforts a consistent look, all PGCPs publications and presentations should use the primary colors and fonts defined below. Secondary colors can be added if desired in any combination.

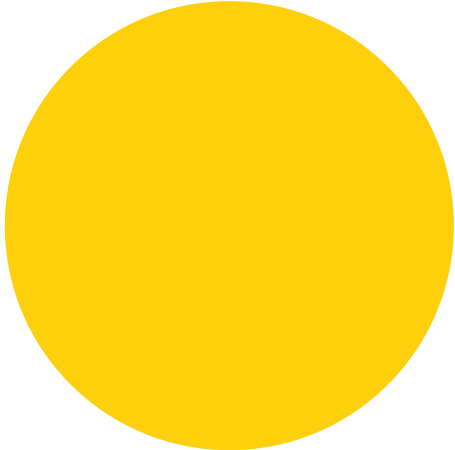
PRIMARY BRAND COLORS



HEX: 8FC7EB
CMYK: 41, 9, 1, 0
RGB: 144, 198, 233

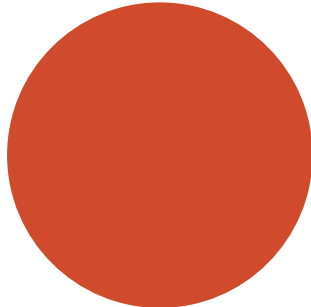


HEX: 256AB4
CMYK: 87, 59, 0, 0
RGB: 37, 106, 180

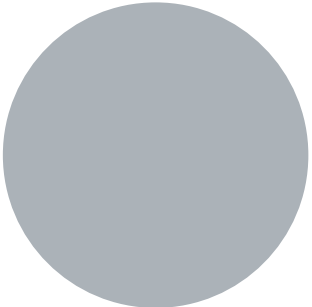


HEX: FFCF07
CMYK: 1, 17, 99, 0
RGB: 255, 207, 7

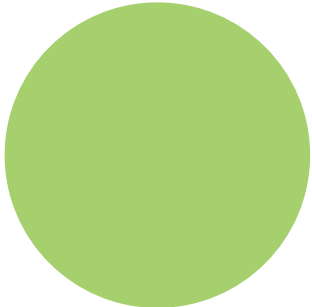
SECONDARY BRAND COLORS



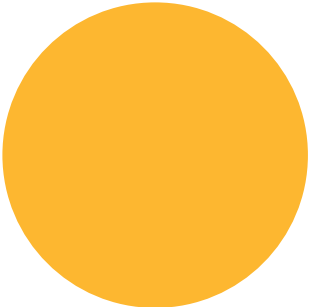
HEX: D04B2D
CMYK: 13, 85, 96, 3
RGB: 207, 75, 43



HEX: ABB2B7
CMYK: 34, 24, 22, 0
RGB: 171, 178, 84



HEX: A5D16D
CMYK: 39, 0, 75, 0
RGB: 165, 208, 109



HEX: FEB734
CMYK: 0, 31, 91, 0
RGB: 253, 183, 49



TYPOGRAPHY

We have two distinct typefaces that are to be used on general branded material. At times, we can use other typefaces if it is appropriate for the piece. Use extreme caution with any display typefaces that mimic calligraphy, brush script, special effects and have ornate flourishes. In the event that none of these typefaces are available, Open Sans may be used.

Sans-Serif

There are many variations to the typeface Myriad Pro. However, the ones we encourage you to use most are displayed to the right.

Myriad Pro (Regular)

Myriad Pro (Italic)

Myriad Pro (SemiBold)

Myriad Pro (Bold)

Myriad Pro (Black)

Myriad Pro (Light SemiCondensed)

Myriad Pro (Light SemiCondensed Italic)

Myriad Pro (SemiCondensed)

Myriad Pro (SemiCondensed Italic)

Myriad Pro (SemiCondensed Bold)

Myriad Pro (SemiCondensed Black)

Serif

American Typewriter is a nostalgic yet clean serif. Please refrain from using the condensed version.

American Typewriter (Light)

American Typewriter (Regular)

American Typewriter (Semibold)

American Typewriter (Bold)

Forbidden

Under no circumstances should these typefaces be used in any fashion.

Brush Script

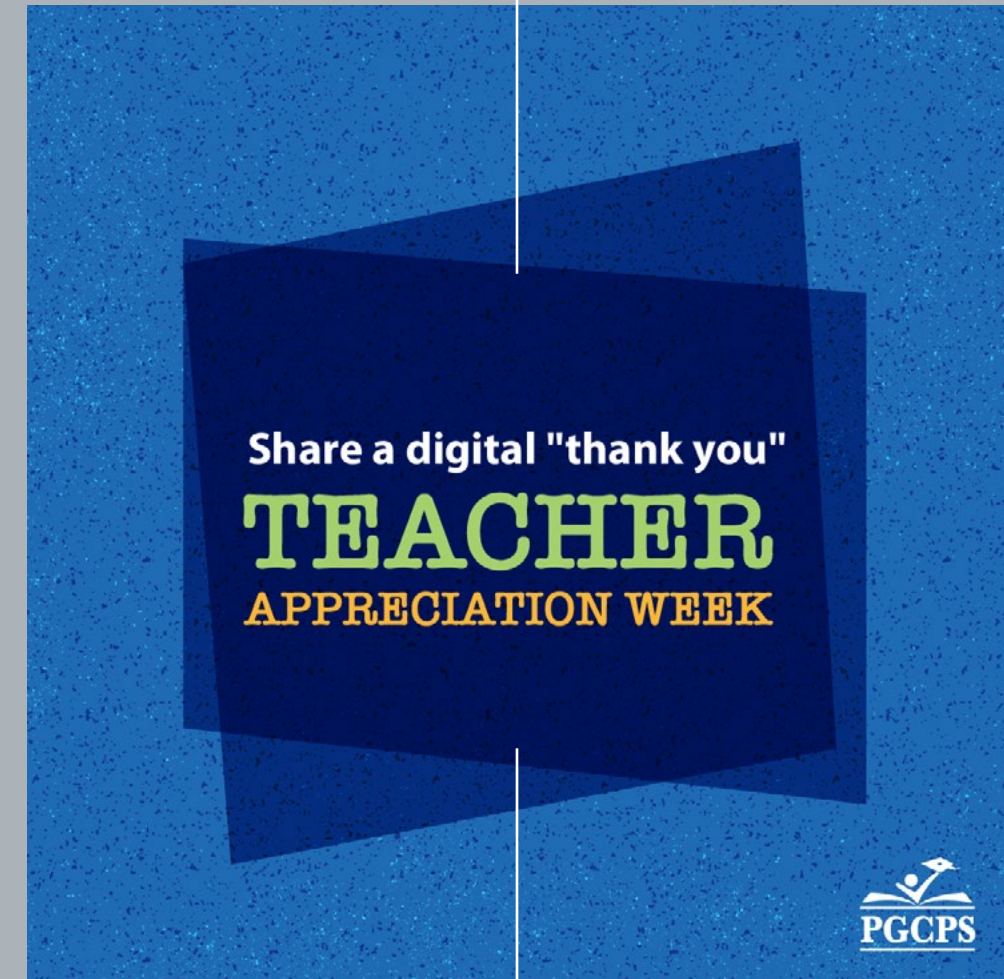
Chancery

Comic Sans

Papyrus

Snell Roundhand

Myriad Pro (Bold)



American Typewriter (Semibold)

LOGO GUIDELINES

The images in the PGCPs logo represent learning (the open book) and graduation (our goal for all students). The colors and fonts of the logo are the primary branding colors listed in this style guide. The logo should appear on all publications and presentations using one of the official versions below:



You can download logo files by visiting the Resources page of the PGCPs Newsroom online.

*Stacked logos may be in either full color, all black, or all white

The book and graduate art in the logo can also be used without the PGCPs portion as long as the text "Prince George's County Public Schools | www.pgcps.org" is placed to the right of it as shown below:



INCORRECT USE

Changes to the design of the official logo are not permitted without prior approval from the Office of Communications. When placing the logo into a publication or presentation, be sure to hold down the shift key when resizing the graphic to keep the scale of the artwork intact.



Deformed



Missing Elements



Illegible

LOGOS FOR SCHOOLS AND OFFICES

To keep the PGCPs brand consistent and reduce the chance that a departmental logo is misinterpreted as a school district logo, all departments and/or offices are discouraged from creating their own unique logos. Please use the logo design below with your department name.*



HUMAN RESOURCES

*Creative variations of the PGCPs logo are permitted for special systemic events and initiatives. If you need clarification, please contact the Communications team.

HERITAGE LOGOS AND WHAT TO DO WITH THEM

Printed documents and signage with outdated PGCPs logos should be recycled or discarded. Employees should not wear apparel or accessories with outdated logos when representing PGCPs in an official capacity.

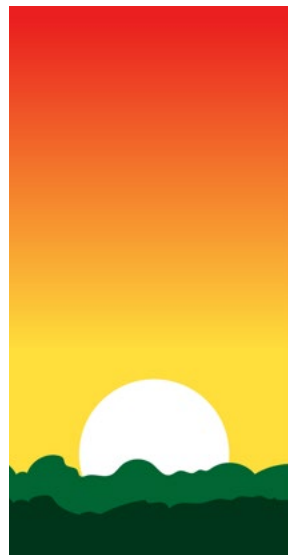


VISUAL AESTHETIC



INSPIRATION

In exploring the look and feel of our brand, we take a lot of inspiration from two primary sources: Bauhaus/UPA-style and grunge & urban touches here and there. With the first source, we look back to the revolutionary and timeless work that was itself inspired by modern art. This resulted in bold, blocky shapes juxtaposed with smooth curves and linework that would sometimes be offset from its color fill. To keep the work from ever feeling too dated, we also incorporate some textures in these shapes such as paint strokes, splatter, grit, rough edges, and halftones. This keeps the designs from feeling too “flat as well.



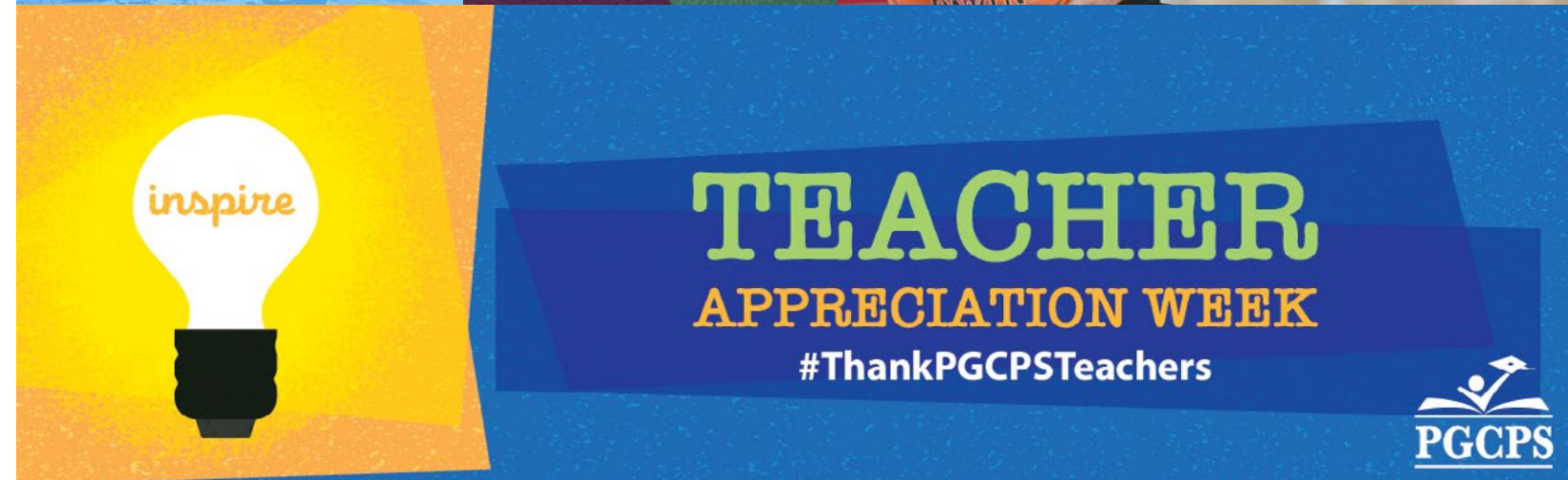
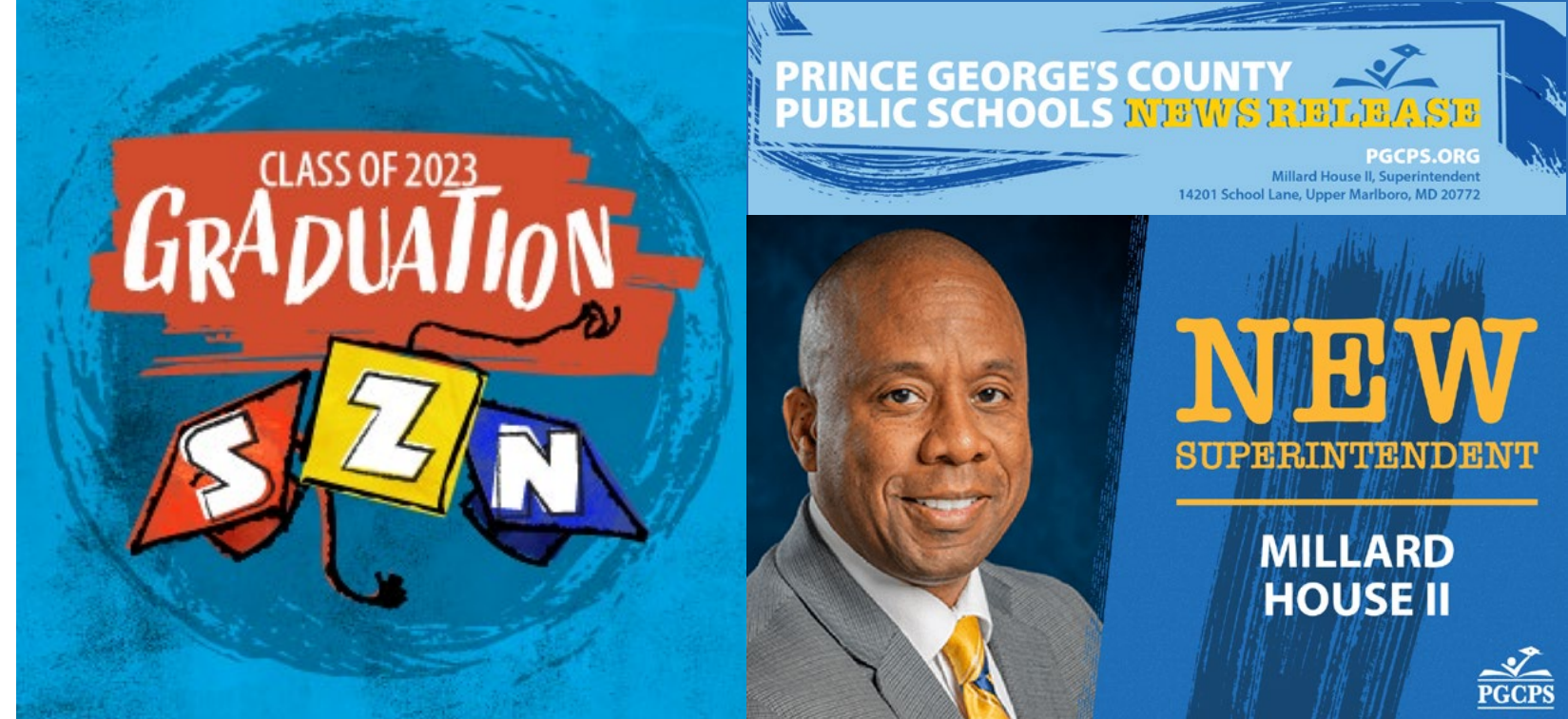
TOO LITTLE VS TOO MUCH

Our style walks a fine line between these two extremes. There are times when just one piece of the graphic needs a texture or extra flare to enhance it. If too much is used, it becomes too messy and crowded. To the left, we have an example of a piece with no texture. It is cold and flinty. We also have one with a lot of texture. It is chaotic and hard on the eyes.



HISTORIC PHOTOS

Nostalgia is something that is an essential part of our brand. Many of us have fond memories of school. We use photography from bygone days and the present to enhance our graphics. That being said, not all photos will be appropriate to use. Please refer to our section on Photo Guidelines for more guidance.



EDITORIAL GUIDELINES

OFFICIAL STYLE GUIDE REFERENCE

The PGCPSS Style Guide is to be used as the primary reference. This style guide is generally based on The Associated Press Stylebook. These guidelines must be used consistently for all publications produced by Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS). Please note the AP Stylebook may not agree with the PGCPSS Style Guide in every instance.

ABBREVIATIONS

Avoid abbreviations—especially if they cannot be quickly recognized by the reader. Exceptions include titles before or after a name or after company names.

Examples:

(1) Dr. John Stevens

(2) Joe Smith, Ph.D.

(3) General Company Inc.

ACRONYMS

On first reference within an article, acronyms must be spelled out followed by the abbreviation in parentheses.

All appropriate acronyms may be found here: [PGCPS Acronyms](#)

Management Oversight Panel (MOP)

Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS)

Department of Family and School Partnerships (DFSP)

Note: If name is only used once in an article, no acronym reference is needed. Please see Appendix A for a listing of our commonly used acronyms.

ADDRESSES

Abbreviate Ave., Blvd., and St. with a numbered address (1600 Pennsylvania Ave.) Spell out all similar words—drive, lane, road.

Spell out and capitalize when part of a formal street name without a number. (Pennsylvania Avenue)

Spell out and lowercase when used alone or with more than one street name. (The school is on the corner of Logan and Marlboro roads.)

Spell out and capitalize street names First through Ninth. Use figures for 10th and above. (7 Fifth Ave., 200 31st St.)

Always use figures for an address number (9 Campus Circle)

Abbreviate directional ends of a street (111 W. 42nd St., 500 L St. NW). Do not abbreviate if the number is missing (West 42nd Street, L Street Northwest).

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Capitalize specific or numbered courses.

"Matt is studying for his test in Algebra 1."

"I am required to take an English and a French class to graduate."

Generic references should be lowercase. "He registered for a mathematics class."

ANNUAL

Do not use the term "first annual." An event is not annual until it is held twice. Use the event name or preface with "first," "first-ever" or "inaugural."

BOARD OF EDUCATION

The official name is the Prince George's County Board of Education. On first reference, use the official name. References to the Prince George's County Board of Education or the Board of Education as an entity are capitalized. Board of Education Members should be referred to as "Board Members."

Correct:

Prince George's County Board of Education (preferred)

Prince George's County school board

Board of Education

Incorrect:

Prince George's County Public Schools Board of Education

Prince George's County School Board

Correct:

Board Chair (preferred)

Board of Education Chair

Incorrect:

Board President

CAPITALIZATION

The Internet "The Internet" is a proper noun and should keep its initial capital.

Meanwhile, PGCPS and other organizations can have an "intranet"; so use a lowercase i.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The leader of Prince George's County Public Schools is no longer referred to as "Chief Executive Officer" or "CEO."

The title is now "Superintendent." (effective July 1, 2023.) See Superintendent entry below.

COLON

Use only one space after the colon and capitalize the first word after a colon if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence.

Example:

She promised this: The county will support the school system.

He had only one interest: playing football.

COMMAS

Use commas to separate items listed in a series. Do not include a comma before the last item in a series.

The desk was old, tattered and torn.

Use a comma before a concluding conjunction in a complex sentence.

PGCPS Acronyms

[Click on the link above to access all school acronyms in the system](#)

The Master Plan is designed to improve student achievement, ensure school safety, and provide staff with a dynamic plan for four years.

Do not use a comma between a person's name and Jr., Sr. or a Roman numeral such as II.

Michael E. Ford Jr.

Millard House II

In sentences, if your main clause is preceded by an introductory clause or phrase, it needs to be set off by a comma.

Meanwhile, a comma is not necessary when a clause or phrase appears after the main clause.

Examples:

Incorrect: After Amber took her test she went outside to play.

Correct: After Amber took her test, she went outside to play.

Correct: Amber went outside to play after taking her test.

CONTRACTIONS

Avoid using contractions in family/community communications and most text formats, unless as part of a direct quotation.

Correct: are not

Incorrect: aren't

Note: The word "it's" means it is and "its" is the possessive form of the word it. Examples:

It's time for the kids to go to school.

The cat ate its food.

COURTESY & ACADEMIC TITLES

Unless used in addressing a letter, a salutation or direct quotation, courtesy titles (Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms.) are not used in a first or subsequent reference. Academic titles (Dr.) will be used on first and subsequent reference.

DAYS OF THE WEEK, MONTHS AND YEARS

Always capitalize days of the week and never abbreviate them. Spell out the months when using alone or with only the year.

Abbreviate Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov. and Dec. when used with a specific date. Do not abbreviate March, April, May,

June, July. Always use all four digits of the year.

When using a day of the week and the date, set off the date with commas. When using a month, day, and year in a sentence, set off the year with commas. When using only a month and year, do not separate the year with commas.

Examples:

(1) The first day of school is Aug. 27.

(2) The elementary school opened in January 2007.

(3) The district used the program until Sept. 1, 2006, at which time it adopted a new program.

(4) The ratings are from the 2016-2017 school year.

Use commas after the year only after a month and a day. The event will be held on June 3, 2023, at Laurel Elementary School. The meeting took place in June 2023 at the school's auditorium (no comma after June or 2023).

Use an s without an apostrophe to indicate spans of decades or centuries: the 1900s, the 1980s. However, if the year is shortened, use an apostrophe: the '80s.

For a range of years: the 2023-24 school year or 2023-2024 school year.

For fiscal years: FY24, FY 2024 or fiscal year 2024.

DEGREES

When using a degree to establish someone's credentials, use abbreviations such as Ph.D. or Ed.D.

Correct:

Mary Parker, Ed.D.

Alvin Wilson, Ph.D.

Incorrect:

Mary Parker, Ed.D

Dr. Alvin Wilson, Ph.D.

When used after a name, academic abbreviations should be set off by commas: For more information, contact John Doe, Ed.D., in the Budget Office.

Use an apostrophe in bachelor's degree, a master's, etc., but no possessive is needed for Bachelor of Arts or Master of Science. Also: an associate degree (no apostrophe).

EDUCATIONAL JARGON

Avoid using words familiar only to educators.

Examples

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: Avoid using "ES" in external communications. It is acceptable to use "Elementary" alone.

Correct:

Laurel Elementary School

Laurel Elementary

Note: When two or more schools are mentioned in a series, lowercase elementary school: "Laurel and Potomac Landing elementary schools."

EMAIL, INTERNET & WEBSITES

If an email address falls at the end of a sentence, use a period. Do not include "http://", "https://", or a backslash at the end of the website address.

Examples:

The school system's website address is www.pgcps.org.

For more information, contact Jane Doe at jane.doe@pgcps.org.

Other uses:

Do not hyphenate email; capitalize when at the beginning of a sentence: Email.

Capitalize Internet; lowercase intranet.

Website is one word; lowercase unless it starts a sentence.

FACILITY NAMES

On the first reference, the official name of an administrative facility should be used in its entirety. It may be shortened on second reference.

Example:

The meeting will be held at the Sasscer Administration Building. Please park in the back of Sasscer. The main entrance to the

administration building is on School Lane.

GRADE LEVELS

Spell out grades one through nine or first through ninth. Use numbers for grades 10, 11 and 12 or 10th, 11th and 12th.

In communications with the community and most text formats, do not abbreviate grade levels. Grade levels may be abbreviated in graphs, charts, and tables. Use “preK” to abbreviate prekindergarten. Do not hyphenate “preK” or “prekindergarten.” Always hyphenate “grader,” whether using as a noun or adjective.

Examples:

Second through 10th grades will be moved.

The program serves first- and third-graders.

Our eighth-grade students will attend the opening ceremonies.

The exam applied to Grade 5 students only.

We will accept students from only grades 9 and 10.

LISTS

Here are the general rules for writing lists/bullet points:

Capitalize the first word and use a period after every bullet point that is a sentence (as these bullets do).

Use a period after every bullet point that completes the introductory stem.

Use no punctuation after bullets that are not sentences and do not complete the stem.

Use all sentences or all fragments, not a mixture.

List that completes the introductory stem.

I like living in Washington, D.C. because of its:

Rich history and culture.

Convenient access to public transportation.

Historic monuments and free activities.

Similar list that does not complete the introductory stem and needs no periods.

Here are the things I like about living in Washington, D.C.:

Rich history and culture

Convenient access to public transportation

Historic monuments and free activities

If bullet points are one word or a short phrase that feels like inventory or shopping list, no punctuation is needed.

Teachers distributed the following items at Back to School night:

Clear backpacks

Pencils

Notebooks

It is also acceptable to begin each item with a lowercase letter, put a semicolon at the end of each item, use “and” after the next-to-last item, and put a period after the last item.

The mission of the Department of Special Education is to:

provide specially-designed instruction to children/students with disabilities from birth to age 21;

ensure that the rights of students with disabilities are protected; and

provide resources to parents, guardians, and families of children and students with disabilities.

MARYLAND

When referring to the state of Maryland, state is not capitalized.

NUMBERS

When a sentence begins with a number, spell out numbers. (Seventeen books are in the room.)

Use figures for 10 and above.

Mixed groups of numbers in sentence: We have 12 tables, 6 computers and 25 teachers.

Numbers with millions/billions: 2 million; \$12 billion; 44.5 billion

When two numbers form one item, spell out the shorter one: Two 7-inch boards; 600 four-page books.

Use figures with ages: The student is 7 years old. He was 17.

Spell out percent: He had 9 percent of the total. Nine percent of the total remained.

Omit decimals/zeros with even dollar amounts: Enclosed are checks for \$175, \$60 and \$54.

Add decimals in uneven dollar/cents amounts: Here are checks for \$123.75, \$89.22 and \$44.33.

Cents: The paper costs 42 cents a sheet. All she had in her pocket was nine cents.

Dates: Do not add “st, nd, rd, or th” behind the date number. (May 2, not May 2nd)

PERIODS

Do not double space after a period or other punctuation at the end of a sentence or after a colon when used in a sentence or a list. In some formatting programs, inserting a second space can leave large gaps between sentences in text that uses full justification.

PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY

The county’s official name is Prince George’s County.

PROGRAMS

The official names of programs are capitalized. Only capitalize the word “program” if it is part of the official title.

Our long-term investment goals for schools are included in the Capital Investment Program.

PUNCTUATION

PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY: The county’s official name is Prince George’s County. Do not use “PG County.”

QUOTATION MARKS

Punctuation goes inside of quotation marks. (The teacher said, “All grades will be posted at the end of the quarter,” but that students need to check SchoolMax for weekly updates.)

SCHOOL NAMES

On first reference, the school’s official name should be used in its entirety. For elementary schools, you may drop “school” on first reference.

Examples:

*Dr. Henry A. Wise Jr. High School enrolls a diverse student body. Wise High School is also known for its athletic accomplishments.

*Buck Lodge Middle School will get a new library in late March. Buck Lodge is the only middle school in the area.

*Laurel Elementary is excited to celebrate its 75th anniversary this year.

Note: When two or more schools are mentioned in a series, lowercase high schools, middle schools or elementary schools: “Friendly and Largo high schools are participating in the event.”

Buck Lodge Middle School will get a new library in late March. Buck Lodge is the only middle school in the area.

Laurel Elementary is excited to celebrate its 75th anniversary this year.

Correct:

In fall 2024, we will welcome a new principal.
Spring 2024

Incorrect:

In Fall 2024, we will welcome a new principal.
Spring, 2024

SENTENCE SPACING

Do not double-space after a period or other punctuation.

SCHOOL SYSTEM NAME

The official name is Prince George’s County Public Schools. No other name for the school system should be used. PGCPs is an abbreviation of the official name and may be used on second reference in external communications or on first reference in internal communications. This also applies to communications written in Spanish. When used in text, “the” should not be used prior to the full name or the abbreviation.

Correct:

Prince George’s County Public Schools
PGCPs

Incorrect:

Prince George’s County Public School System
Prince George’s Public Schools
Prince George’s County Schools
PG County Schools
The Prince George’s County Public Schools offer a wide array of academic programming.

SCHOOL SYSTEM WEBSITE

The school system website address should be written as www.pgcp.org, not <http://www.pgcp.org/>.

SCHOOL YEAR

Refrain from using SY in external communications.

Correct:

The 2023-24 school year will begin on a Tuesday.

Incorrect:

Please update your child’s contact information for SY24.

SEASONS

Do not capitalize seasons of the year. There is also no comma between the season and the year.

Correct:

In fall 2024, we will welcome a new principal.
Spring 2024

Incorrect:

In Fall 2024, we will welcome a new principal.



Spring, 2024

SUBJECT NAMES

Areas of instruction and specific subjects are not capitalized with the exception of languages, such as English, Spanish or Mandarin. The name of a department specializing in a subject area may be capitalized.

Examples:

Tasha’s favorite subject is French, but she also excels at mathematics.
The Science Department will host a professional development session on Tuesday.

SUPERINTENDENT/SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

The leader of Prince George’s County Public Schools is now referred to as the Superintendent or Superintendent of Schools, effective July 1, 2023. We no longer use the Chief Executive Officer or CEO title. See CEO entry above.

Correct:

Prince George’s County Public Schools Superintendent Millard House II
PGCPs Superintendent Millard House II
Superintendent Millard House II
Millard House II, Superintendent of Schools

Incorrect:

Chief Executive Officer Millard House II

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

PGCPs style for telephone numbers is 301-555-1212. If an extension is needed: 301-555-1212, ext. 276.

Incorrect:

(301) 555-1212
301/555-1212
301.555.1212
3015551212

TITLES

Titles used before a name are capitalized. Titles that follow the name are in lowercase. Do not capitalize titles when the individual’s name is set off by commas.

Examples:

Associate Superintendent John Smith will address concerns regarding the staff changes.
Linda Johnson, principal, spoke to parents during the meeting.
The superintendent, Millard House II, presented the new policy to the Board of Education.

Examples:

Associate Superintendent John Smith will address concerns regarding the staff changes.
Linda Johnson, principal, spoke to parents during the meeting.
The chief executive officer, Dr. Monica Goldson, presented the new policy to the Board of Education.

WEIGHTS & MEASUREMENTS

Always use figures. Examples: 5 ounces, 3 pounds, 8 feet, 4 miles

EMAIL GUIDELINES

MANDATORY UNIFORM EMAIL SIGNATURE LINES

All PGCPs employee email signatures must be consistent and contain the following information and logo:

Employee's Name (bold type) Preferred Pronoun* (italic)

Employee's Title (italic type)

Employee's School or Department

Prince George's County Public Schools

Employee's Office Telephone Number | Employee's Cell Phone Number | PGCPs Social Media Info

Email address

SCHOOL-BASED STAFF



Jane Smyth (*she/they*)
Teacher

Greenbelt Middle School

Prince George's County Public Schools

Office: 301-555-1212 | Cell: 240-555-9999 | Twitter: @greenbeltPGCPs

jane.smyth@pgcps.org

NOTE: Use default or standard sans serif fonts.

DO NOT:

Use script or other fancy fonts

Add personal statements, quotations, legal disclaimers or other personalized signatures/messaging

*Preferred Pronouns are optional and should be added in the same line as your name

REQUIRED "OUT OF OFFICE AUTO-RESPONSE" FOR EMAILS

If an employee will be out of the office on scheduled leave, your email should reflect that schedule. It is the employee's responsibility to have an out-of-the-office, auto-response email.

Sample Email Out of Office Message:

Thank you for your message. I will be out of my office from (state the date(s) you will be away from your office), but will respond to your message when I return on (state your expected return date). If you need immediate assistance, please contact (state the name of an alternate point of contact) at (state your alternate's email address) or (state your alternate's telephone number).

EDITING CHECKLIST/ WRITING TIPS

- **Edit, edit, edit!** Always proof your work and make revisions as needed. Look over your work and read aloud if necessary.
- **Spell check is your friend!** Always conduct a spell check and watch for tricky words that are spelled correctly, but not used in the proper context (e.g., site/sight or to/too).
- **Be accurate!** Always double check names, ages, addresses, dates and titles.
- **Be consistent!** Use consistent tone, style and voice. Do not write something one way in a paragraph and then write it incorrectly in the very next paragraph. (e.g., Prince George's County Board of Education/Prince George's County Public Schools Board of Education)
- **Do the math!** Always check over your numbers to make sure that everything adds up to the correct amount.
- **When in doubt, look it up!** Take the time to look up information to ensure it is correct.
- **Drop unnecessary words and avoid redundancy.**

Original: Letters may be sent by putting them in pony.

Revised: Letters may be sent via pony.

Original: Recovery time varies but is approximately about one week.

Revised: Recovery time is about one week.

Original: The HPC Training Program application is enclosed for your convenience. Should you need any additional information, please feel free to contact Ms. Jane Snow, Program Supervisor, Office of Career Advising at 301-555-5555 or via email at jksnow@pgcps.org.

Revised: The HPC Training Program application is enclosed. For additional information, please contact Jane Snow, Program Supervisor, Office of Career Advising, at 301-555-5555 or jksnow@pgcps.org.

WORD USAGE

accept/except

“Accept” means to receive: “He accepted the trophy.” “Except” means to exclude: “Everyone came to the game except John.”

affect/effect

“Affect” is mainly used as a verb, meaning to influence: “The budget cuts affected the entire staff.”

As a verb, “effect” means to accomplish or bring about: “The new CEO will effect change within the company.”

As a noun, “effect” refers to the result of an action: “Her performance had a positive effect on the company.”

African American

Hyphenate as an adjective: “African-American students; no hyphen as a noun since the first word modifies the second one.”

a lot

Not alot

assure/ensure/insure:

“Assure” means to promise or make sure: Marvin assured Michael that he would bring the pencil.

“Ensure” means to make certain: We hired a specialist to ensure our project would meet the deadline.

“Insure” means to guarantee against risk or loss: “I insured my house against fire damage.”

because/since

The two words are not interchangeable. “Because” refers to a reason or condition: “He arrived late because he got lost.” “Since” refers to time: “Crime has decreased considerably since 1994.”

cannot

Do not use can not.

century

Lowercase and spell out numbers less than 10: “first century, 21st century”

c vs. cc

Always use lowercase “c” when copying individuals with letters and memorandums.

Correct:

c: John Snow
Jane Snow

Incorrect:

cc: John Snow C: John Snow
Jane Snow Jane Snow

child care

Write as two words, no hyphen in all cases.



grade-level

(adjective)

in-depth

Always spell with a hyphen, not indepth.

ongoing

Not on-going

on-site (adjective), on site (noun)

The meeting will be held in an on-site conference room. The meeting will take place on site. (The same rules apply to off-site and off site.)

percent

Spell out in normal usage; OK to use % sign in tables, charts, graphics.

PowerPoint

Not Power Point or Powerpoint

school-based

Always hyphenate.

toward

Not towards

which vs. that

Incorrect: No bags which are over 100 pounds will be allowed.

Correct: No bags that are over 100 pounds will be allowed.

“That” is reserved for restrictive clauses, clauses that are essential to the meaning of a sentence. For nonrestrictive or non-sentential clauses, use “which.” My bedroom, which is on the second floor, has a window.

wide

No hyphen. Examples: citywide, districtwide, nationwide, schoolwide, statewide. This is a schoolwide initiative.

Veterans Day

Not Veteran’s Day or Veterans’ Day

PRINT vs. DIGITAL

As we expand our efforts in social media and digital advertising, please keep in mind that requirements for individual platforms may occasionally change. Print has its own rules as does social and it is essential to lay out these differences. Proper formatting will ensure quality printing and professional online appearance.

SUBJECT	PRINT	DIGITAL*
RESOLUTION	300 DPI and up	72 DPI - 150 DPI
COLOR MODE	CMYK	RGB
DELIVERABLE FORMATS	PDF or HI-RES JPEG	PNG, JPEG, MP4, GIF
COLOR OUTPUT	Sometimes the color needs to be checked with a test run	May slightly change color based on settings
COPYWRITING*	Description of event included on graphic	Description of event included in caption only
BACKGROUND	Always a fill	Can be transparent (PNG)
TURNAROUND TIME	Printing time is a factor	Rendering time is a factor

*Digital standards are frequently changing and will be updated as needed.

OUTSIDE GRAPHIC ASSETS

When including partner logos on graphics, please request the original vector file. Please request either a hi-resolution vector file (EPS) or a hi-resolution PNG.

VECTOR FILE OR 300 DPI RESOLUTION

If possible, an outside graphic should be given as a vector file or hi-resolution PNG. This way, we do not run into issues when it comes to including it in our designs.

INCORRECT



CORRECT



NO WHITE BACKGROUND ON LOGO FILE

While it is possible to remove the white from logos, it costs time and effort to remove it. If possible, a PNG with a transparent background should be provided.

INCORRECT



CORRECT

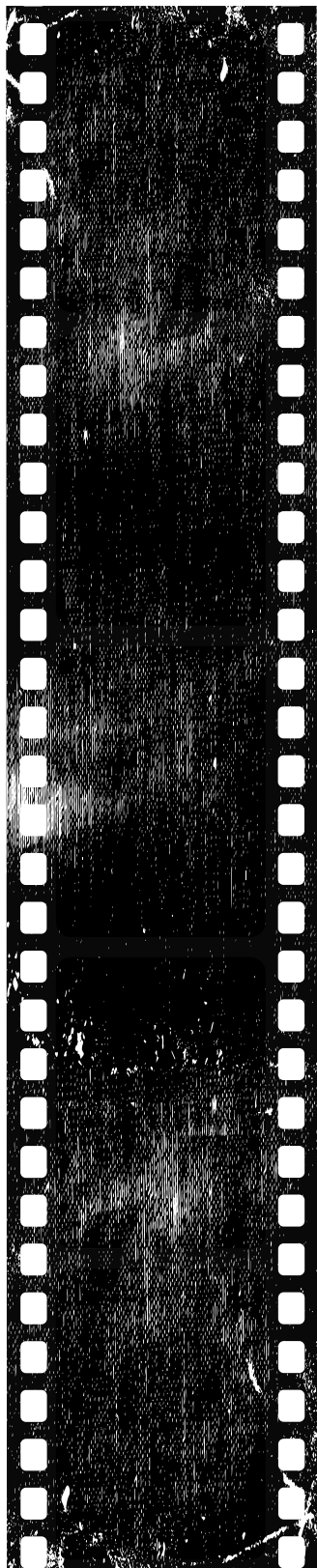


COMPROMISE WHEN POSSIBLE

If an outside vendor has a graphic or logo that is off-brand from ours, we can always try to compromise on how it is presented. This excludes anything that is in opposition to our beliefs in equality and inclusion. There will be situations where vendors can't match our branding colors perfectly.

VIDEO GUIDELINES

When capturing video, please consider the following tips from our Digital/Visual team for a high-quality product.



TIPS WHEN SHOOTING VIDEOS

- Determine the use of the video and whether you should shoot vertically (IG Story/TikTok) or horizontally (TV/Facebook)

LIGHTING

- Keep the light in front of your subject's face and avoid back lighting
- Natural light is ok
- Ring lights are an inexpensive way to get great lighting

AUDIO

- Good audio is critical for a video
- Film in a quiet location
- Avoid large spaces (eg: gymnasium)
- Position the subject close to camera or use a lavalier mic to capture better audio
- Adhere to copyright laws by using stock music and sound effects from our vendor

AVOID "SHAKY" VIDEO

- Use a tripod to stabilize your video

SCRIPTING TIPS

- Consider your audience when writing your scripts
- Avoid jargon and speak to your target audience

A NOTE ON POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS

- Make sure you are creating in a widescreen format
- Do not have any typography less than 20 pt
- All imagery and type should be legible

COPYRIGHT GUIDELINES

With tools such as Google and Pinterest, it is so easy to find inspiration for our graphics. That being said, there are rules we must keep in mind when we are dealing with third party images. This doesn't just include when we use the native photograph or graphic. It also includes the work we create based on the source material.



STOCK

- Work should be royalty free or purchased on a stock site
- Sites such as Adobe Stock and Shutterstock can be used
- Most images will have a watermark in order to force purchase



PUBLIC DOMAIN

- Work should be royalty free or purchased on a stock site
- A lot of pre-1923 graphics and films are in the public domain
- This also extends to classic works of literature and articles where the copyright has lapsed



COPYRIGHTED WORK

- Graphics and videos with a copyright should be used for inspiration only and carefully
- The work done based on the copyrighted work should be 70% different
- Simply reusing imagery found on Google Images or Pinterest is strongly discouraged due to ambiguity of copyright

For a more thorough breakdown of copyright practices, please visit [here](#).

PHOTO GUIDELINES

Photography is an essential tool for our graphic work. Not only do they help tell the stories of our school system, they invoke the mood of our events as well. We use a combination of photographs taken by staff as well as royalty free work. Below, you will find some guidelines on how to pick appropriate pictures for our advertising.



MOOD

Unless a particular subject is being featured, images should show real, meaningful interactions between students, staff, and other participants.



EXISTING PHOTOGRAPHY

Using school district-specific photos is preferred, but in absence of this, stock images may be used. Choose photos with high resolution, good composition, and natural lighting and color. If focusing on a singular subject, such as a guest speaker or specific resource, make sure the image is not cluttered.

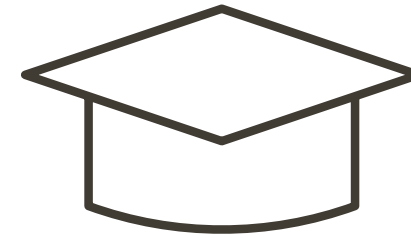


STYLES TO AVOID

Outside of instructional uses, screenshots of programs or websites should be avoided. Please also refrain from using clip-art, cluttered, and overprocessed imagery on official district documents.

ICON GUIDELINES

Historically, there were many people who could not read. To guide them to services and businesses, icons were created that were easily recognizable. Today, we still use them. We approach our selection and creation of icons with the knowledge that, while many people can read, it is always best to have icons. They guide faster when browsing on a printed or digital piece. Also, they are easier to understand for those who may not be familiar with English. Below is a quick guide on how you can create the right icons for our system.



SIMPLE SHAPES

With icons, the idea is to have imagery that easily conveys the subject. This means that we look for icons that are as simply composed as possible without being vague.



DEALING WITH HUMAN FIGURES

Our icons are usually gender neutral. This way, in addition to being inclusive, we do not have to worry about having both male and female iconography for signs. We also try to use colors that won't represent any race or ethnic background in our icons. That being said, there are some situations where we will represent a sex.



TEACHER'S LOUNGE

WHEN TITLES ARE NEEDED

Sometimes, an icon still needs type accompanying it. This is usually the case on our website(s). With this in mind, we try to keep the shape either a circle or rounded square/rectangle. The typeface will be one of the two house fonts. This way, we stay on brand.

