

Dear Cotswold Families,

The School Leadership Team (SLT) kicked off the 2017-2018 school year with a combined meeting of the Cotswold SLT and the Billingsville SLT on August 15th. Now, we are focused on representing you in the planning for our transition to become a paired school as well as ensuring a successful 2017-2018 school year. As we represent you, our focus remains on the experiences and successes of our students and families. We will approach each opportunity to influence CMS and make decisions that are within our scope with that focus at the fore front.

Parents often ask what the difference is between the SLT and PTA. The PTA focuses on school culture, parent involvement and community engagement, while the SLT focuses on the School Improvement Plan(SIP) which includes; academics, safety/discipline, and long-range planning. While the SLT and PTA often work together, our focuses are different.

School Leadership Team meetings are open to the school community and the dates of our meetings are published in the [Cotswold Calendar](#). In addition, notes from our meetings and the School Improvement Plan are also published. There are several ways to find information about the SLT:

- SLT Internet Site: <http://schools.cms.k12.nc.us/cotswoldES/Pages/SchoolLeadershipTeamSLT.aspx>
- School Improvement Plan: <http://schools.cms.k12.nc.us/cotswoldES/Pages/SchoolImprovementPlan.aspx>
- SLT Meetings on the Cotswold Calendar: <http://cotswoldpta.org/calendar/>
- Cougar Bites Weekly eNewsletter. To sign up for Cougar Bites, go to join.myschoolanywhere.com and enter the code COUGARMSA
- Information about the Cotswold/Billingsville Paired School Transition (including milestones and accountability): CMSListens.org

Due to the significant focus on transition planning this year, we have partnered with the PTA to form a transition team that will help us get parent feedback to influence decisions, build our community spirit, and communicate progress along the way. This allows the PTA and SLT to continue to focus on our respective responsibilities while providing the support our schools will need during this transition. The transition team is co-led by Michelle Abels and Sasha Prince and includes members who expressed interest through the PTA Volunteer Survey. If you would like to learn more about opportunities to help with the transition, please email cobi.transitionteam@gmail.com. To stay abreast of the progress with the transition, please visit CMSListens.org.

The SLT and PTA will work with our transition team to provide ongoing updates and engage more parents to get feedback as we make and influence decisions. For now, here are some updates about recent/current transition milestones:

School Leadership Structure

- The Cotswold and Billingsville combined SLT (including parent representation from both schools) submitted a leadership proposal to CMS and the Board of Education on 5/22/17. This proposal was approved and Principal Hash was formally announced at the Principal for both schools starting in the 2018/19 school year.

School Naming

- At our August 15th combined SLT meeting our CMS Learning Community Superintendent, Ms. Tara Lynn Sullivan shared information about school naming. Some key points shared were:
 - Staffing allocations are done by school number and by population. Billingsville currently gets an allocation of .5 teachers for each connect area (i.e. PE, Art, Music) and Cotswold gets an allocation of 1.5 teachers per connect area. When we are paired we will have just over 500 children at each campus. If we are considered one school with one name, we might not hit the threshold for an allocation of 2 teachers for each connect. However, if we keep individual school names, we will get an allocation of 1 connect teacher per campus (2 total). Our staffing allocation projections are better with two school names.

School Naming Continued

- The **International Baccalaureate®** governance body does not require us to have 1 name for our paired school. They will work with us as one school community because we have shared leadership.
- The name “Billingsville” has unique [historical significance](#). For context: The Billingsville School was built in 1927 and is one of the three most intact [Rosenwald schools](#) remaining in Mecklenburg County. Constructed under the auspices of the Rosenwald Foundation of Chicago, the Billingsville School serves as a landmark in the history of black education, illustrating the period when schools, particularly those in rural locales, were constructed through philanthropic rather than public funding. The Billingsville School serves as an institutional landmark in the community of Grier Heights and in Mecklenburg County.
- The [CMS school naming process](#) is lengthy and must include the following:
 - The Committee shall solicit input from community, historical and cultural groups.
 - All decisions of the Committee should be made by consensus.
 - All recommended names should be easily identifiable with the school and should have special meaning to students and citizens of the community.
 - The recommended names should not be in conflict with the names of other schools, buildings, or facilities in the system.
 - The recommended names may represent the geographic area or community in which the school is located, a historical figure or location, or an individual who is deceased whose name has special significance and /or who made an outstanding contribution to the school or school system, community, state or nation.
 - The Committee should research the history of each recommended name and provide a summary of the research with the submitted list.
- Once the committee submits a recommendation to rename a school, the board of education will vote on the recommendation and has ultimate naming authority. Due to historical significance of the Billingsville name, any change that removes or alters that name will likely not get community buy-in or board approval
- **Decision:** The combined SLT has considered all the pros and cons of a name change and has decided that changing the school name creates more disadvantages for our students and community. Therefore, our focus will be on creating an additional community name that can be used with our school names, creating a branding/marketing campaign, and considering selection of a combined school mascot.

Bell Schedule

- CMS shared bell schedule options with the combined SLT on 8/15/17. The combined SLT responded by submitting a bell schedule proposal asking for a staggered start time at or between 8:15 and 9:15. This time-frame was selected so that both schools do not experience a change of more than 1 hour and magnet families that have a significant commute are not adversely impacted.
- CMS shared a transportation survey (due 9/14) that explained that a staggered schedule was not feasible and asked families to consider 3 options for bell schedules and bus assignments.
- The SLT and PTA shared parent feedback about the transportation survey and parents were encouraged to submit feedback on their paper survey, in the survey link online, and via CMSlistens.org
- The PTA and SLT will continue to work with CMS and both school administration teams to ensure parent and student impact is carefully reviewed and family feedback is considered as they make the final decision on topic.

We are encouraged by the community spirit we see every day as we prepare for our paired school transition, while staying focused on the things that we can do to benefit our students and families right now. This is an amazing community! If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to an SLT Representative. A full list of our team is published at: <http://schools.cms.k12.nc.us/cotswoldES/Pages/SchoolLeadershipTeamSLT.aspx>

Sincerely,

Lecil Sullivan, SLT Chair

Rashidah Morgan, SLT Vice-Chair

**This letter contains hyperlinks to additional information and can be viewed online at CotswoldPTA.org.