

# Cross Oaks Elementary

Changes to Morning Arrival Systems, October 2017

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **How are the Cross Oaks morning arrival procedures changing?**

In the past, parents of Cross Oaks students have been able to enter the building freely in the mornings before school to walk children to their classrooms. Beginning Tuesday, October 17th, these procedures will change. Parents will now have the opportunity to drop their children off by car at two locations on campus from 7:15 to 7:40 am. Parents can also choose to park and walk their children to the front entrance of the building from 7:30 to 7:40 am.

Beginning on the 17th, parents will no longer be entering the building to walk their children to class or eat breakfast with them in the cafeteria. However, we are creating a new way for our parents to volunteer formally in the mornings on campus. These VIP Volunteers, after passing a background check, will be invited to serve our school in a variety of ways, assisting our staff in our morning arrival procedures.

### **Why are these changes taking place?**

When Cross Oaks Elementary School first opened, we served 414 students in the 2010-2011 school year. As the Cross Oak Ranch neighborhood has grown over the years, our student population has increased to more than 700 students in the past two school years. Out of 23 elementary schools in Denton ISD, we are now the second largest with 725 students. As our school family has grown, our limited number of parking spaces has made it more difficult for our parents to find reliable parking in the mornings and walk their children to their classrooms before the tardy rings at 7:40 am. This has resulted in a significant increase in the number of students who are late to class each day. When students are tardy, it causes disruption to the learning environment and interferes with our teachers' ability to begin their school day in a smooth and predictable manner.

This year, we adopted a new program at Cross Oaks called Capturing Kids' Hearts. All teachers and staff received training in August that has empowered us to use specific strategies and techniques to develop more positive and meaningful relationships with our students while giving them greater ownership over their learning environment. An essential component of this program involves teachers greeting all students at the door with warmth and enthusiasm to engage them personally and help their day begin on a positive note. Although it is understandable that many of our parents want to visit with teachers in the morning at their door, this is unfortunately making it more difficult for teachers to engage with their students in this very important way.

Finally, there have been many discussions on our campus among staff and parents for several years about how we can maintain the safest possible school environment when students are arriving to school in the morning. While we are able to verify the identity of adults who come to our school during the school through an organized system in our front office, this is not possible before school with the high number of adults who enter the school each morning. These changes will help our school remain safe and secure in the mornings as children arrive to school, just as it is during the school day.

### **Why is Cross Oaks making these changes now, instead of earlier in the school year?**

Because these changes impact many of our morning arrival systems, it was important for us to take the time necessary to solicit feedback from parents, staff, and the district before finalizing these new systems. Parents and staff members were surveyed in July, and valuable input garnered through these sources was used by school committees to create new policies and procedures to involve parents while maintaining a safe and positive school climate. Our campus leadership team, which includes teachers, parents, community members, business leaders, and district leadership representation, also provided input regarding these changes.

We also understood that because we are changing our policies regarding parents walking their children to class in the morning, it was important to add a second car drop-off location before school. These changes involve working with the district to modify signs around the campus and repaint portions of our parking lots. We also needed to recruit additional safety patrol students through a detailed application process. We collected data regarding our previous drop-off procedures, and we are confident that our new systems will allow parents to drop their children off by car each morning more quickly and efficiently.

Finally, it was important for us to create additional opportunities at Cross Oaks for parent involvement. In addition to grade level parent meetings and evening PTA events such as Fall Festival and movie nights, we are increasing our school-run family nights to eight events throughout the school year. We are also pleased to share a new opportunity for parents and family members to become VIP Volunteers in the mornings before school begins. Whether you can volunteer every day or less often, all are invited to complete the VIP Volunteer Form at this link: <https://goo.gl/forms/rT8v7111oxNZbJV82>. Please note that all campus volunteers are required to complete a district background check.

**Can we make it easier and quicker for parents to drop off their children in the morning, especially considering parents won't be able walk their children into the school and to their classrooms?**

Yes! We are adding a second option for parents to drop off their children by car each morning from 7:15 to 7:45 am. In addition to the current drop-off location we offer using the long driveway at the end of Corral Street, parents will now be able to drop students off by car using the cafeteria parking lot off Liberty Boulevard. When entering this parking lot, cars will form a line in the right lane and stay to the right until they reach the sidewalk in front of the cafeteria. In both drop-off locations, safety patrol students and staff members will be present to open your door and help your child out of your vehicle. Please work with your child to prepare them to exit the vehicle quickly and safely when you arrive at your drop-off spot.

Parents are encouraged to choose the car drop-off option that best fits their needs based on where they live in the Cross Oak Ranch neighborhood.

**If parents are not able to walk their children to class before school, are they still welcome on campus in the mornings?**

Absolutely! We are seeking VIP volunteers to serve in the mornings before school from 7:10 to 7:40 am. Whether you are interested in volunteering on a daily basis or less frequently, we want you to be included! We are looking for moms, dads, grandparents, and other student family members who feel called to serve our school and deepen their connection to our school community. All those interested in becoming VIP Volunteers are invited to complete this form: <https://goo.gl/forms/rT8v7111oxNZbJV82>. All volunteers are required to first complete a district volunteer application, which includes a background check.

All VIP volunteers who complete the form will be contacted by email or phone the week of October 9th so they can prepare for their new volunteer responsibilities.

**Will parents be able to eat breakfast with their children in the cafeteria?**

Beginning October 17th, parents will no longer enter the cafeteria to eat with their children. Parents who wish to be on campus in the mornings are encouraged to become VIP Volunteers. Some VIP Volunteers will assist students in the cafeteria. However, they will be helping with all students eating breakfast, not just their own child.

**Can we sign all parents in each morning and check their ID's before allowing them into the building?**

We would love the ability to verify the identity of all of our guests who enter the building by having them sign in at the front office. Unfortunately, it is not logistically possible for

us to verify the identify of all of these adults each day and still allow enough time for students to get to class by 7:40 am when the tardy bell rings. Based on the high number of parents who currently enter our building each day and the limited number of staff available to assist with a checking-in process, there is not a way to do this efficiently. Additionally, our office staff have other responsibilities in the morning before school that prevent them from taking on a daily task of this magnitude.

**Can I still come eat lunch with my child at school? Can parents still come for class parties and other school activities?**

We will continue welcoming parents and other relatives to come to school and have lunch with their children during their class's assigned lunch time each day. These procedures will remain unchanged from how they have been since the beginning of school. Please verify your child's lunch time before joining us for lunch for the first time, and please come 5-10 minutes early so that your child has enough time to eat lunch and enjoy your company before returning to class at the end of their lunch period. Parents are still welcome at class parties and other school events such as Field Day and the Fun Run in April. Teachers will continue inviting parents to awards assemblies who have children who are recognized that grading period.

**Since student safety is a concern, can we have a police officer on campus during school hours?**

We would welcome having a police officer at Cross Oaks to help maintain safety and security. The district currently does not provide school resource officers for elementary campuses, and the cost of retaining an officer is too great to be covered by a campus fundraiser. There are elementary schools in the area whose neighborhood homeowners associations cover the cost of a school resource officer, but this is not a common practice.

**How can parents be confident that their children will make it safely to class once they are in the building? I am worried that my younger child may not be constantly monitored on the way to class as they would if I were walking with them.**

We have highly structured systems and procedures for supervision of students in the mornings before school, and all staff members receive specific training to keep our students safe and monitored. We are updating our systems of supervision to prepare for these changes, and all staff will receive additional training prior to October 17th. From 7:15 to 7:30 each morning, all students are held in the cafeteria and gym as they eat breakfast and wait with their friends. When the first bell rings at 7:30, students will proceed to class in an organized manner one grade level at a time, and students will be supervised continuously by multiple adults in the hallways as they make their way to their classrooms. All classroom teachers will continue standing at their doors waiting to greet students individually and welcome them to class. While 4th and 5th grade safety

patrol students will continue assisting with our morning procedures, there will be a heavy adult presence in the cafeteria, gym, and hallways each morning to ensure continuous supervision.

We will have unique systems for our AM pre-k and PPCD students before school. These students can arrive by car at either drop-off location, or parents can walk them to the front of the school where they will be welcomed by a pre-k teacher from 7:30 to 7:40 am and held in lines before traveling to class with the teacher. Whether in the gym, the cafeteria, or at the front of the school, pre-k teachers and staff will always be monitoring our youngest students. Our pre-k students will be led to their classrooms from each location by multiple staff members, and only after our older students have traveled to their classrooms.

**I am a working parent, and walking my child to class in the morning is the only opportunity I have to be involved at school. How can I still stay connected to Cross Oaks and involved in my child's education?**

We encourage parents who have availability from 7:10 to 7:40 am to become VIP Volunteers to become involved by serving our school in a variety of ways. We are also increasing parent involvement opportunities outside the school day, including evening family events.

**Walking my child to class allows me to have important conversations with my teacher about my child's academic and behavioral progress. It also allows me to let my child's teacher know if my child is having a rough morning. How can I communicate these concerns to my child's teacher and keep informed on their behavioral and academic progress?**

We recognize that parent-teacher communication is essential to a child's daily and long-term success in school. It is very important that parents have the ability to communicate with teachers frequently and in a variety of ways. Although parents will not be having face-to-face conversations with teachers in the mornings before class, every Cross Oaks teacher will have systems this year designed to allow parents to see evidence of their academic and behavioral learning firsthand through technology applications called Bloomz and Seesaw. Through these applications, teachers (and students!) can share evidence of learning directly with parents during the school day, and parents have the ability to praise their children for their hard work, provide feedback, and ask questions that challenge them to take next steps in their learning journeys.

Whichever application your child's teacher uses, Bloomz or Seesaw, convenient, readily accessible communication tools are built in that allow parents and teachers to communicate with one another quickly and efficiently through technology.

We understand and value that there are times when technology communication is not enough, and a face-to-face conversation is needed. Please reach out to your child's teacher if you like to schedule an in-person conference or phone conversation to discuss

your child's academic or behavioral progress. Parents are also welcome to schedule appointments through the office to visit classrooms in person to see their child's learning activities firsthand.

**What if my child has a large or fragile class project they need help carrying to class? How will you accommodate parents who need to deliver something to the classroom that children cannot carry on their own?**

Parents who are not comfortable sending a delicate project or large item with their child through our car drop-off lines are welcome to bring these to the front office. We will ensure these items are safely delivered to the classroom. This is similar to the system already in place for parents delivering supplies or food for class parties through the front office.

**My child wants to go to the computer lab in the morning. How will this work?**

Our computer labs are open each morning from 7:15 to 7:38 am for our 2nd - 5th grade students to complete weekly Imagine Math and Istation assignments. When students in these grade levels arrive at one of our drop-off locations and enter the school, they simply need to inform a staff member that they would like to go to the computer lab. Staff will be present in the hallways to ensure these students safely travel to the computer labs from the cafeteria or gym. Students are monitored in the computer labs by staff until 7:38, at which time they proceed to their classrooms. If you would like your child to work in the computer labs before school, please contact your child's teacher.

**Will there be any changes to other school arrival and dismissal systems during the day, including afternoon dismissal procedures?**

At this point, we have no plans to change other systems during the school day. Pre-K and PPCD morning dismissal and afternoon arrival systems will remain unchanged. Afternoon dismissal procedures at 3:00 pm will also not change at this time. We understand that car pick-up in the afternoon takes longer than many of our parents wish it would, and we will investigate ways we can be modify these systems to be more efficient in the future while maintaining safety for our students, families, and staff.

**What will this new system look like next year? Will parents be able to walk their children to class at the beginning of the school year?**

Parents will have the opportunity to walk their children to class at the beginning of the 2018-19 school year, at least for two weeks into the year so that students can get to know their classroom and teacher. It is important to us that parents have the chance to

begin the school year with their students and become acquainted with their classroom and teacher.

**My child has separation anxiety and/or a disability, and I am worried about how they will handle this change emotionally while feeling safe in the school without me. What can parents do to help our more sensitive children with this transition?**

We understand that these changes may be difficult for some of our students and families, and we are here to help! We want this transition to be as smooth and easy as possible for our students and their parents. Here are some suggestions:

1. Speak with your children about these changes in advance of October 17th, and as early as possible. When having conversations with your children, speak about these changes in a positive light. This is an opportunity for students to build independence and maturity, and we want to celebrate this opportunity for students to grow in their autonomy.
2. Practice these changes with your student in the two weeks before October 17th. Parents who currently walk children to class can gradually reduce their role in the morning to ease students into these new systems. Instead of walking your children to the classroom door, begin saying goodbye to them where their grade level hallway begins and allowing them to finish walking to their classroom on their own.
3. Parents are encouraged to remind children there are many adults at the school who have special jobs throughout the building each morning, and that they have a plan for keeping all students safe while they wait in the gym, eat in the cafeteria, and walk to their classrooms. Remind your child that all of the adults in the school have received special training to make sure children are happy and safe.
4. If your child is nervous about you not being in the school in the mornings, consider becoming a VIP volunteer by completing this form: <https://goo.gl/forms/rT8v7111oxNZbJV82>. By volunteering in the mornings before 7:40, your child will know that you are in the building helping with important morning jobs.
5. Remind your child that you can come to visit them at school during lunch or at other special times like class parties and awards assemblies.

Parents are always encouraged to contact their child's teacher and/or campus administration with any questions or concerns regarding these changes. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if we can be of any assistance!