



Text of email sent to employees in Units I, II, and V on June 16, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

First, I must say that your enthusiasm for our new Learning Management System (LMS), **Brightspace**, has been inspirational. I know that engaging in a new platform, during a school year where *change* was the only constant, was not easy. However, as it is embedded in an educator's DNA, you not only rose to the occasion, you crushed it! I mentioned before that Brightspace would help us make a quantum leap to deliver amazing instruction, but you took the leap and we are already better for it. I want to also give kudos to the wonderful LMS Implementation Team who tirelessly dove into the unknown to give our educators, students, staff, and families a friendly and functional environment in which to engage.

To the teachers who participated in Cohorts 1 & 2, you have amazing proponents of Brightspace. Your support has prepared and equipped your colleagues to move into our new Brightspace 'home' for the next school year and leave our Google Classroom 'tent' behind. We could not have come this far without you. With deepest sincerity, it is my pleasure to join you to do good work on behalf of our students every day.

I've used the analogy of our living in a tent for the past 16 months and now moving into our new sturdy Brightspace home. We will be leaving behind the temporary structure that sustained us through this pandemic (Google Classroom) and will now utilize a more robust and dynamic platform (Brightspace) with which to grow even stronger. As summer comes upon us, I want to make sure that you're fully aware of some key aspects of this transition as noted below.

Brightspace - Our New Home

Employees will begin using Brightspace as their primary teaching and learning hub starting in August 2021. The use of Brightspace includes, but is not limited to organizing teaching materials, delivery of instruction, assigning of student work, engaging in professional learning, communicating with families, and more. Additionally, our families will be receiving information over the summer through the Office of School and Family Partnerships to prepare them for leveraging the many benefits of the home-school connection through *Brightspace for Families*. [Please visit our Learn Grow Succeed \(LGS\) - Unified Talent website to peruse the many Brightspace-related PD offerings available this summer to encourage your comfort and confidence in using Brightspace.](#)

[Click here for an informative list of terms to know.](#)

Google Tools Integration within Brightspace

Other Google Apps

Teachers will be able to make Google Assignments in their Brightspace courses, and will have full access to Google Apps (Drive, Calendar, Slides, Keep, Forms, Jamboard) to also use in their Brightspace courses. As promised, the tools we have learned how to use during this school year will be available for your use inside our new Brightspace home.

Google Meet

Google Meet will be accessible in Brightspace and will be the virtual classroom/conference platform to be used when appropriate. Of course, we won't be using Google Meet as frequently in the upcoming school year because we will be back learning in person, five days a week this fall.

Other Applications in Brightspace

AACPS will continue to use software systems such as PowerSchool SIS, PowerSchool Gradebook Pro, Performance Matters, and Unified Talent. These systems will all be clickable from our new Brightspace home. Over time, these tools will have increased integrated functionality in Brightspace.

Brighter with Brightspace Conference

To keep the positive momentum building for successful implementation, an amazing professional opportunity will be offered this summer. **The *Brighter with Brightspace Conference* will be held July 27 & 28.** Details are still being refined, but please know that the implementation team is listening to your feedback. Plans include a *Beginning with Brightspace* pathway for those who would appreciate seeing the introductory sessions again to build upon their previous learning. An *Intermediate* pathway will pick up where Module 3 ended and bring out more of the features and functionality that Brightspace affords educators and administrators. An *Advanced* pathway will also be provided for interested participants. A path for the Brightspace Campus Champions will offer a series of sessions that not only expand their understanding of our new LMS but also delve deeper into user support at the school level. [If you have any additional feedback, would like more information about becoming a Brightspace Campus Champion, or would like to sign up for this conference, please fill out this **feedback form** no later than June 21, 2021.](#)

Ongoing Brightspace Support

[Brightspace office hours will continue through the summer for you to access facilitated support for your on-going Brightspace learning.](#) You can also contact Brightspacesupport@aacps.org to seek additional assistance, if questions arise after office hours.

Curriculum - Transition to Brightspace

The process of migrating curriculum resources from Blackboard to Brightspace has already begun in preparation for Fall 2021 use. Classes rostered by the student information system (SIS) will become available in Brightspace as soon as PowerSchool comes back online following the summer updates. If you are interested in working on your courses over the summer, we strongly encourage you to work in your assigned sandbox. Once your SIS-generated Fall courses are created in August, you will be able to easily import your work and materials into your new courses. [If you are a non sis-rostered teacher \(clubs, Media, EEE\), please request a course be generated for you now by using this form.](#)

Blackboard Materials - Transition to Brightspace

Items currently in use in Blackboard are in the process of being migrated to Brightspace. If you have an active course in Blackboard now and wish it to be transferred to Brightspace, please contact Dan Hochradel (dhochradel@aacps.org) as soon as possible. **Note:** All access to Blackboard ends on August 31, 2021.

Google Classroom - Planning for the End of Use

As described previously, we are **moving away from a reliance on Google Classroom**; it will not be rostered this summer. Additionally, the ability to create new Google classrooms will end July 15, 2021 followed by a complete archival of all Google classrooms on August 15, 2021. It is imperative that your self-authored resources are saved in your Google Drive (or OneDrive) so that they are accessible for Brightspace after August 15, 2021. [Here's more information on Archiving/Deleting Google Classrooms.](#) **Note:** *We will not be deleting any documents or materials located in Google Drive. Contents in archived Google Classrooms will remain available through June 2022. We will provide further guidance on recreating past Google! Classroom assignments and archived materials into the new Brightspace environment.*

Preparing for the Future

The expectation for teachers and students is that **Brightspace** will be the only electronic instructional platform in use as we move forward. It is imperative that all teachers, students, and families begin to learn and leverage this new LMS resource. Although we are planning for a full return to in-person learning in the fall, it is intended that the Brightspace platform can be immediately and seamlessly accessed when we choose to use a virtual platform for meetings, professional development, back to school night, learning during an inclement weather day, or learning during a potential short period of quarantine due to COVID-19.

We have been on this journey together since December of 2020. I hope you are as proud as I am of how far we've come. Remember, you can always address any of your concerns about Brightspace by reaching out to BrightspaceSupport@aacps.org. Information at www.aacps.org/lms is also available and updated frequently. For more learning opportunities, visit the [Learn Grow Succeed - Unified Talent](#) site and our AACPS [Brightspace Support Website](#) .

I hope you have a relaxing, peaceful, and rejuvenating summer. **Thank you** for all that you have done over this past year to help our students and families. Your work and dedication have been amazing, meaningful, and very much appreciated.

Thank you,

Maureen

Maureen M. McMahon, PhD

Deputy Superintendent for Academics & Strategic Initiatives

Anne Arundel County Public Schools – Where ***amazing*** happens every day!