The Village Charter School

101 Sullivan Way, Trenton, New Jersey

The Village Voice

BACK-TO-SCHOOL EDITION · AUGUST 2026

"It takes a village to raise a child."

A MESSAGE FROM THE CEAO

A new year, built on the partnership that makes us a village.

Our school carries its name for a reason. The Village reflects a simple, enduring truth: a child learns best when families, teachers, and community stand together around them. As we open the 2026–2027 school year, I am counting on that partnership.

This summer our team prepared for a year built on momentum. In June, our Board of Trustees adopted a new five-year Strategic Plan, and this fall we put its first priorities to work — strong daily instruction, a culture where every child feels they belong, and consistent attendance that keeps learning on track. You'll see this most clearly in the classroom through CharacterStrong, our new social-emotional learning program, which gives every student daily practice in the values we share as a community.

Our doors open to students on Monday, August 24, with a refreshed weekly schedule. Full days run 8:00 a.m. to 2:36 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, and Wednesday is an early-dismissal day ending at 12:30 p.m. In the sections that follow, you'll find everything you need to start the year with confidence — schedules, uniform and attendance expectations, meal information, and the forms to complete in your first week.

Thank you for the trust you place in us each day. We take this responsibility seriously and joyfully. I look forward to welcoming your children back on the 24th.

With gratitude and high expectations,

Dr. Dana T. Bedden, CAA, SHRM-CP
Chief Executive & Administrative Officer

OUR MOTTO FOR THE YEAR

Set the Bar. Meet the Bar. Exceed the Bar. Raise the Bar.

Our school community is rallying behind a powerful motto. This simple phrase is our daily roadmap for helping students build character, discipline, and a growth mindset. Here's how we're putting it into practice together.

- **Set the Bar:** Defining clear, high expectations for academics, behavior, and citizenship.
- **Meet the Bar:** Showing up daily, working hard, and consistently hitting those baseline goals.
- **Exceed the Bar:** Pushing past comfort zones to deliver extra effort and exceptional quality.
- **Raise the Bar:** Celebrating our victories, resetting our limits, and striving for a new personal best.

GETTING READY

Starting the Year Right

A quick reference for the everyday rhythms of school — arrival and dismissal, what to wear, how we handle attendance, and the forms to take care of in week one.

First Day: Monday, August 24

The school day begins promptly at 8:00 a.m. Because supervision isn't available beforehand, students should not arrive before 8:00 a.m.

Weekly Schedule

Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri	8:00 a.m. – 2:36 p.m. (Full Day)
Wednesday	8:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. (Early Dismissal)

View the full 2026–2027 school calendar.

Week-One Forms

Complete all required PowerSchool forms during the first week, and update them any time your information changes: emergency contacts, medical information, lunch program application, transportation, and authorized pick-up.

Uniform

Colors are hunter green, white, and khaki.

- Collared polo or dress shirt with the VCS logo, tucked in
- Khaki bottoms (knee-length or longer) with a black belt
- All-black, closed-toe shoes or sneakers
- Middle school: white button-down with green tie

Need uniform assistance? Contact the Director of Student Services — we're glad to help.

Breakfast & Lunch

Breakfast is available during morning arrival, and lunch is served daily in the cafeteria. Outside food drop-offs aren't permitted during the day. Students may bring a clear, labeled water bottle — water only.

See this month's breakfast & lunch menus.

Phones & Devices

To protect focus and learning, cell phones and personal electronics are not used during the school day — including phones, smartwatches, gaming devices, and wireless earbuds. We return confiscated items to a parent or guardian.

A SHARED COMMITMENT

Attendance Matters — Every Day Counts

Consistent, on-time attendance is one of the strongest supports for a child's success. Being here every day fuels academic growth, participation, friendships, and a real sense of belonging — it's also how students meet the bar.

What Is Chronic Absenteeism?

Chronic absenteeism means missing **10% or more of the school year** — roughly 18 days — for any reason, whether excused or unexcused. Because every absence counts, even a day here and there adds up quickly over the year.

What Counts as a Full Day?

To be counted present for the full school day, a student must be physically in school for at least **four hours**. Arriving after 10:00 a.m. on full days (or after 9:00 a.m. on early-dismissal days) may be recorded as absent for that day, except with prior administrative approval.

Our Corrective Action Plan for 2026–2027

Village Charter School ended last year with a chronic absenteeism rate of **35%** — well above the New Jersey average of **14.4%**. As required by state law, we are implementing a multi-tiered Corrective Action Plan to reduce chronic absenteeism to 25% or below by June 2027 and continue toward the state average. This is a shared effort, and your partnership is the most important part.

A Multi-Tiered Approach

- **Tier 1 — Schoolwide:** Daily attendance messaging in homerooms, positive and non-shaming reminders, family campaigns before high-absence periods, and recognition for strong or improved attendance.
- **Tier 2 — Early Support:** PowerSchool sends absence alerts to families. Staff follow up at 3, 5, and 10 absences and build an Attendance Action Plan together to get things back on track.
- **Tier 3 — Individualized:** For students facing bigger barriers, we hold attendance case conferences with families and create individualized success plans with clear, supportive goals.
- **Tier 4 — Legal Referral:** When absences continue despite support at earlier tiers, the school files a truancy notice with the appropriate local and state agencies, as required by law.

How Families Can Help

- Aim for daily, on-time attendance — every day builds momentum
- Schedule appointments outside of school hours whenever possible
- Report absences before 9:00 a.m. by calling **609-695-0110**
- Reach out early if a barrier comes up — transportation, health, or anything else. We're here to help, not to judge.

THE VILLAGE WAY

Culture That Comes First

Our Strategic Plan treats belonging and academics as inseparable. This year, CharacterStrong gives every student daily practice in the character our community is built on.

New this year: daily CharacterStrong. Every student, K–8, now takes part in dedicated social-emotional learning each day — building self-awareness, responsible decision-making, empathy, and the skills to work well with others.

Our Seven Core Values

- **Responsibility —** be dependable, accountable, and involved
- **Respect —** honor yourself, others, school property, and community
- **Giving —** help others through service and kindness
- **Self-Discipline —** work hard and do your best in all situations
- **Perseverance —** keep trying when learning or life becomes difficult
- **Honesty —** tell the truth and take responsibility for your actions
- **Compassion —** notice when others need help and respond with care

Eagles PRIDE

Positive Words and Actions · Responsibility for Self · Integrity and Honor · Display Self-Control · Excellence in Everything

How We Celebrate Students

Leadership awards, monthly incentives, principal breakfast, perfect attendance recognition, classroom awards, and dress-down passes.

WHAT'S NEW ON CAMPUS

A Fresh Look for the New Year

We've been busy this summer making our building an even better place to learn. Here's what students and families will notice when they walk through the doors.

Refreshed Multipurpose Space. Our gym, cafeteria, and auditorium have been upgraded with new flooring and hunter green wall mats — a brighter, safer, and more school-spirited space for meals, movement, assemblies, and celebrations.

New Middle School Lockers. Brand-new lockers for our middle school students are scheduled to be in place before the end of August, giving our older Eagles a dedicated space as they take on the new year.

BEYOND THE SCHOOL DAY

Community & Partners

After-School Program — Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County

We're proud to partner with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Mercer County to bring a full after-school program into our building—so students can keep learning, growing, and having fun in a safe, familiar place after dismissal. Open to all students in grades K–8.

The program includes Academic Enrichment, Homework Help, Tutoring, Recreational Activities, and more.

Begins	Tuesday, September 8
Grades	K through 8
Daily Pick-Up	By 6:00 p.m. · 5:00 p.m. on half days
Enrollment	Space is limited — enroll early.
Cost Support	Scholarships available; Childcare Connection accepted

To enroll or learn more, visit **bgcmercer.org**
Spruce St. Clubhouse — (609) 695-6060, ext. 0 · 1040 Spruce St., Lawrence
Center St. Clubhouse — (609) 392-3191, ext. 0 · 212 Center St., Trenton

Save the Date: Fall Gala & Fundraiser



Join us for an evening of dinner, community, and celebration in support of our more than 360 students — sponsored by The Village Charter School Fund.

Date	Thursday, October 29, 2026
Time	6:00 – 10:00 p.m.
Location	The Boathouse at Mercer Lake, West Windsor, NJ
Reserve By	Friday, October 16
Tickets	$100 General Admission · $150 Friends of VCS · $1,000 Corporate Table

Reserve your seat

Unable to attend? Donations of any amount are accepted. Questions? Email dbedden@villagecharter.org.

WHO WE ARE

District & School Leadership

District Leadership

Dr. Dana T. Bedden, CAA, SHRM-CP	Chief Executive & Administrative Officer
Mr. Glenn Richardson, CPA	School Business Administrator
Mrs. Tara Pepe	Director of Finance
Mrs. Tamara Powell	Director of School Operations & Human Resources
Dr. Theresa Flim	Director of Student Services & Affirmative Action Officer
Ms. Tamika Law	Assistant to the Chief Executive & Administrative Officer

School Leadership

Dr. Keoke Wooten-Johnson	Principal
Mrs. Sarah Santiago	Assistant Principal
Ms. Dawn Wynn	Assistant Principal
Ms. Jill Cummings	Academic Coach
Mrs. Faye Jackson	School Administrative Assistant & Data Specialist

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Key Dates This Fall

August 24	First Day of School — Monday; doors open 8:00 a.m., dismissal 2:36 p.m.
Wednesdays	Weekly Early Dismissal — school ends at 12:30 p.m.
Week 1	Early Dismissal All-Week 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. | Complete Required PowerSchool Forms
September 8	After-School Program Begins — Boys & Girls Clubs, grades K–8
October 16	Fall Gala Reservation Deadline
October 29	Fall Gala & Fundraiser — 6:00–10:00 p.m., The Boathouse at Mercer Lake

STAY CONNECTED

Contact & Quick Reference

101 Sullivan Way, Trenton, NJ 08628 | Main Office: 609-695-0110, Ext. 2 | Attendance: Ext. 100

School closings & alerts: Apptegy Alert System, the school website, and our Facebook & Instagram pages. All current policies are available at villagecharter.org under Quick Links, or through the Main Office.

"It Takes a Village to Raise a Child."

The Village Charter School is an equal opportunity institution that does not discriminate based on race, color, creed, religion, sex, affectional or sexual orientation, ancestry, national origin, age, marital status, social or economic status, or disability.