

Making the 6th Grade Transition to



Home of the Spartans



Welcome to O'Rourke Middle School!!

5th Grade to 6th Grade Transition Booklet

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A Transition For Students *and* Parents and Caregivers

The transition from elementary school to middle school is an important one. While students and parents are sometimes worried about this transition, we find that with the right support, encouragement and attention, students (and parents/caregivers) thrive at our middle school.

HOME SWEET HOME

- All 6th grade students are located in one wing, together, for their first year at O'Rourke.
- 6th graders take all of their classes, including lunch, with 6th graders only.
- In 6th grade, teachers work together in teams for English, Social Studies and Science. A team is made up of teachers who share the same group of students. Math and Reading are taught by any of the 6th grade teachers.
- At the beginning of the school year, 6th grade students participate in several formal and informal team building activities to forge new friendships and foster a sense of teamwork that they will carry with them throughout the year.
- In the Fall semester, counselors meet with small groups of sixth graders to introduce themselves to the students and provide information regarding the role of the counselor. This "Getting To Know You" group provides a springboard for all other student/counselor individual meetings.

SUBJECT MATTERS

- **English**
- **Literature**
- **Mathematics**
- **Science**
- **Social Studies**
- **Chorus or General Music**
- **Physical Education**
- **Art, Health, German, Spanish and French** each in a sequence of 6 weeks as part of an exploratory, ungraded program.
- The final period of each day is a **Flex** period. Many 6th graders usually spend this time in their homerooms working on homework assignments, class work or meet with teachers for extra help. It is also the time period when students attend Band/Orchestra, AIS or Resource.
- Opportunities in **Band** and **Orchestra** are available to students studying a musical instrument. Performances are held twice per year. These classes are held during 9th period twice weekly. Group instrumental lessons are held once each week on a rotating basis with students missing the same class one or two times each ten week marking period.
- **Academic Intervention Services (AIS)** are mandated services designed to help students achieve the learning standards in English Language Arts and mathematics.
 - AIS classes for English and/or Math are a curriculum based add-on program in the 6th grade. Identified students receive their AIS support services during their flex period every other day.
 - Parents will be notified by mail during the summer months if their child was referred to an AIS or Core class.



Dear Parents and Caregivers,

As some of you may already know, the middle school years are some of the most exciting, challenging and above all else, interesting for our children. These years are some of the most important in terms of growth and development.

As with any type of development, there can sometimes be growing pains. But by having supportive parents/caregivers, our children will finish these years stronger academically, socially and emotionally.

As a school, we look forward to working together as a team in helping our children get the most out of their middle school years.



“It is not what you do for your children, but what you have taught them to do themselves that will make them successful human beings.”

-- Ann Landers



Tips for Parents/Caregivers



Bring your child to the middle school during the summer to help them get comfortable with the building. Older siblings or friends can guide them through the building, pointing out classrooms, the Library, gymnasium and cafeteria.



Encourage your child to participate in clubs/activities.



Buy a combination lock for your child and have them learn how to use it before the school year begins. Practice using the lock over the summer to familiarize how to use the lock and combination.



Create a consistent supervised study time for your child. Establish a study area that can be monitored.



Encourage your child to ask for extra help when needed.



Check in periodically about your child's progress.



Allow your child to gain a sense of independence and responsibility.



Encourage your child to practice good hygiene.



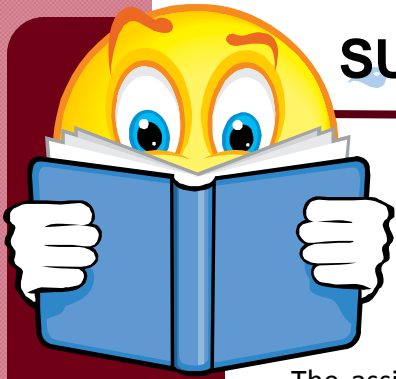
Have your child "pack" up for school before going to bed. It will make things easier in the morning.



Stay in communication with your child's educators through phone, email and your child's assignment planner.



Finally, DON'T forget that your child is young and there will be bumps in the road. Mistakes will be made-- but it's all a part of the learning process.



DEVELOPING GOOD HABITS

RECORDING AND ORGANIZING ASSIGNMENTS

The assignment planner is a basic organization tool in which students record both daily and long-term assignments. In addition to recording assignments, the planner can be used to help parents monitor their child's work and communicate with teachers.

Students with poor study habits are often inaccurate when recording assignments – leaving out important details. Some students choose to rely on their memories, write assignments down in a number of different locations, or resist using the planner completely. Unfortunately, this lack of organization often leads to “forgotten” and late assignments or assignments that do not meet the teacher's directions resulting in poor grades.

- **Consistent** use of the daily assignment planner is the first step toward being successful. Your child needs to neatly record all homework -- including quiz and test dates in their assignment planner.
- Check your child's assignment planner each evening to see that homework is written accurately and completely. The word “none” should be written next to a subject that has no homework.
- Verify that assignments are completed each day. Insist that your child bring home **all** of his/her assignments to show you that they have been completed.
- To help keep a record of completed assignments encourage your child to use a bright colored pen or marker to place a checkmark (✓) or a diagonal line (/) across the assignments in their planner indicating that it has been completed. ***Make sure that they place the assignments in their appropriate folder and finally in their book bag.
- When your child has turned in an assignment or the teacher has recorded it as completed, instruct them to place a circle around the checkmark or make a second diagonal line (\) (creating an X) over the assignment in their planner to indicate that it has now been **completed and turned in**.



Long Term Assignments and Projects and Tests: Use the assignment planner to discuss time management.



- When working on a long term assignment you will need to schedule several blocks of time over one or more weeks. A good way to plan for the completion of a project is to break the assignment into smaller tasks and schedule the tasks over the time period allowed.
- Often times teachers have already divided a large assignment into smaller tasks with specified due dates for each task and the completed project/assignment. Be sure to record all the due dates and tasks in your agenda the day the assignment is received.
- Tests and quizzes should be entered in the planner the day the teacher announces the upcoming exam. Review sessions offered by teachers should be recorded in the planner and study time should be reserved/written in the planner for several days prior to day of the test/quiz.

WHY AND HOW TO STRUCTURE A HOMEWORK TIME

Many capable students find it difficult to settle down and work on homework or chores that are not as “interesting” as other activities such as using the computer, playing outside, talking on the phone, or watching television. A student’s understanding of the importance of homework and their ability to organize materials, prioritize activities, and discipline themselves is a combination of acquired skills and individual maturity. Until these characteristics are developed, children will require adult supervision and support to meet their responsibilities both at home and in school. Studying does not come naturally and needs to become a habit.

Often times when a parent asks their child, “Do you have any homework?” it is answered with a quick “No” or “It’s all done”. Children are anxious to get to the “business” of play and need to receive a clear message that homework is a priority – it’s the child’s job. They need to understand that homework provides an opportunity for additional learning, serves as a “hands on” review for the day’s lesson, helps prepare them for the next day’s class, and is directly linked to their being a successful student. Combining a discussion on the importance of homework with a **consistent** study plan for accomplishing the goal of neatly completing and passing in each day’s assignments on time are building blocks for academic success that will help your child develop responsibility, independence, and self-confidence.



ESTABLISHING A STUDY TIME

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- Discuss and establish with your child **the time of day/evening** that will be set aside for homework. Late afternoon and early evening are the best times. The time should be consistent each day and supervised by an adult. Homework should **NOT** be done in bed or close to bedtime. Involve your child when selecting a time. It is important to consider whether your child needs “down” time or exercise when they get home from school before starting their homework or if your child would do better starting immediately.
- Decide with your child **where he/she will study**. Establish a comfortable place with few distractions. It should have good lighting and be away from outside noises and disturbances. It needs to be a television/telephone free time.
- Consider your child’s specific needs when selecting a study area. Some children need a space where they can be monitored to insure that they are staying focused on their work. Others are able to complete their work with little or no supervision.
- Discuss with your child **the length of time** that is to be set aside for homework. It should correspond to your child’s age and grade level. The middle school student (at BHBL) has approximately 1 to 1½ hours per night. This, of course, is an estimate and your child needs to understand that the actual time to complete assignments will vary each day based on assignments and scheduled tests. It is important, however, **to set a minimum study period of one hour** each night. If your child does not have any assigned work for that day they can read for Reader’s Workshop, organize folders, review class notes, and study for tests.
- Plan for **study breaks**. Some students are able to concentrate for long periods of time while others need to break every 20 minutes. Your child’s age and individual needs will help you to determine how long they can concentrate before needing a rest. Some students may prefer a method of listing work that is to be accomplished before taking a short break. Using a kitchen timer to signal break time and back to work time is helpful.
- Providing the **necessary supplies** for accomplishing homework such as pens, pencils, paper, an eraser, pencil sharpener, stapler, scissors, tape, ruler, and a protractor helps to prevent wasted time. A dictionary and thesaurus are references that should also be close by. If your child studies at a desk, assigning one drawer for materials helps them to be organized. If they study at a table, creating a supply box that can be stored nearby is recommended. It’s important to do a periodic supply check making sure there are always pens, pencils, and paper readily available.
- **Do not** allow this study time to be the source of a power struggle. Make it clear that school is your child’s responsibility.
- Once study time is completed, allow your child the opportunity to enjoy leisure activities.

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ADDITIONAL WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD TO BE SUCCESSFUL

- STAYING AFTER FOR EXTRA HELP --Activity Period is held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays (some exceptions exist during weeks including a school holiday). We encourage students to stay and get extra help, study for tests, redo assignments, work on projects, etc. Your child may take the Activity bus home or you may pick him/her up.
- Ask your child to find a “STUDY BUDDY” for each of their classes who will collect work **when** your child is absent and with whom they can review notes, study, and share information.
- Encourage your child to participate in class discussions and ask questions. If they are uncomfortable asking questions during the class encourage them to see the teacher at the end of the period or after school.
- Use open-ended questions when talking with your child about school, for example: “Describe what one thing you learned today, or something funny that happened today” rather than “How was school”.
- Don’t hesitate to contact your child’s teachers or the school counselor with any questions that you have regarding your child’s adjustment and progress in school.

INCENTIVES & CONSEQUENCES

Often attempts made by adults to motivate students to improve their study habits and grades in school are unsuccessful. Strategies such as “grounding” the student and the “banning of enjoyable activities” – especially for long or undetermined periods of time – are often met with increased resistance. The continued use of an unsuccessful strategy, in addition to not achieving the desired results of improved grades, can lead to an increase in family stress and strained relationships. When a strategy has been **consistently** applied and has not achieved satisfactory results or in some cases generates additional concerns and problems, it is time to stop and consider a new approach. The use of incentives can often be a successful alternative to punishment.

- Try using positive incentives to motivate your child. For example: **Daily privileges are earned for successfully meeting all the responsibilities set for that day.** If a student meets all the day’s goals, they are allowed daily privileges (such as computer time, telephone, television). If the day’s responsibilities are not met then there are no privileges for that day. (Be sure your child’s responsibilities are clearly outlined – preferably in writing.)
- Using consequences that are immediate, short-term, and that “fit” the misbehavior seem to be more effective than long-term punishment.
- Whatever your plan – **Be Consistent** and start small, acknowledging and encouraging your child’s progress. If the goals become “easy” talk with your child about adjusting the goals but be careful not to fall into the “trap” of never being satisfied or always raising the stakes.

Parents and School Counselors . . . Partners Helping Kids.

As students progress from one grade to the next, their counselor moves with them, providing continuity and time to really get to know students and their parents. They take a holistic approach to making sure each student has a positive experience at O'Rourke Middle School and that they are well-prepared for successfully meeting the challenges of the future.

The president of the New York State Counselors' Association states the following:

School counselors play an instrumental role in shaping students for success – not just academically, but socially, behaviorally, and emotionally as well. For instance, they:

- *Help students deal with and diffuse problems brought into school from home and outside the classroom;*
- *Act as consultants to teachers and serve as sources of institutional knowledge for administrators;*
- *Provide academic and career guidance to students, and help them meet and overcome emotional- and mental- health challenges;*
- *Establish and promote supportive learning environments;*
- *Develop academic and behavioral intervention programs; and*
- *Foster and maintain parental involvement*

At O'Rourke Middle School, the school counselor focuses on helping students balance the demands of school, family and friends. Special attention is paid to teaching "life skills" and character development that will serve students well in any classroom, job or social situation. Counselors are available as resources to parents and caregivers as students navigate their way through the middle years of their education.

In addition to meeting with students on an as-needed basis for academic or social connections, the counseling center services include:

- Meeting with 6th graders in small groups to help acclimate them to the school and the counseling center.
- Meeting with all 7th graders in small groups to introduce a self-discovery and career awareness activity.
- And meeting individually with 8th graders for a continuation of career awareness activities and for the selection of their 9th grade courses.

School Buses and Dismissals

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THE BUS: The list of bus routes are in the back of the school calendars that is sent to each household. Please look to see what bus you are scheduled to take on your first day. If you have any questions, please call the Transportation Department at 399-9141 (Ext. 3525).

ACTIVITY PERIOD: Activity Period is a time when all teachers are available for extra help at the end of the school day. Activity Period is from 2:30-3:20 on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Students may get help on homework, study for a test, or make up work. Students may take the activity bus (late bus) home or be picked up on these 3 days of the week.



DISMISSALS:

2:20- First Dismissal

2:28- Second Dismissal

2:32- Walkers and Bike riders dismissed

2:35- 3:20- Activity Period

(Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays)

Lunch/Cafeteria Information

All 6th grade students eat lunch together. There are many different healthy food options available to them from the hot meal option of the day to a la carte items like individual salads, soup of the day, snack items and beverages.



TIP: Students have the option of bringing their lunch to school, however, it is important to know that many students find it easier to bring lunch in a brown paper bag as opposed to carrying a lunch bag/box. This is mainly because students aren't always able to bring their lunch bag/box back to their lockers and don't like to carry it from class to class. To avoid any lunch boxes and Tupperware items that may be discarded, talk to your child about what option is best for them.



Resources for Middle School

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Parents and Students

BOOKS FOR PARENTS

The Everything Tween Book: A Parent's Guide to Surviving the Turbulent Pre-Teen Years

by Linda Sonna

The Rollercoaster Years by Charlene C. Giannetti

BOOKS FOR STUDENTS

Too Old for This, Too Young for That!: Your Survival Guide for the Middle School Years

by Harriet S. Mosatche

How I Survived Middle School by Nancy Krulik

Middle School: The Real Deal- From Cafeteria Food to Combination Locks
by Juliana Farrell

Middle School is Worse than Meatloaf: A Year Told Through Stuff
by Jennifer L. Holm and Elicia Castaldi

Help! I'm in Middle School...How will I Survive? by Merry L. Gumm

WEBSITES FOR PARENTS

Parenting a Preteen

<http://www.pamf.org/preteen/parents/parenting.html>

Transitioning to Middle and High School

<http://www.theparentreport.com/resources/ages/teen/education/624.html>

Smoothing Your Child's Transition to Middle School

<http://www.greatschools.net/cgi-bin/showarticle/3106>

Moving Up to Middle School

<http://www.schoolfamily.com/school-family-articles/article/817-moving-up-to-middle-school>

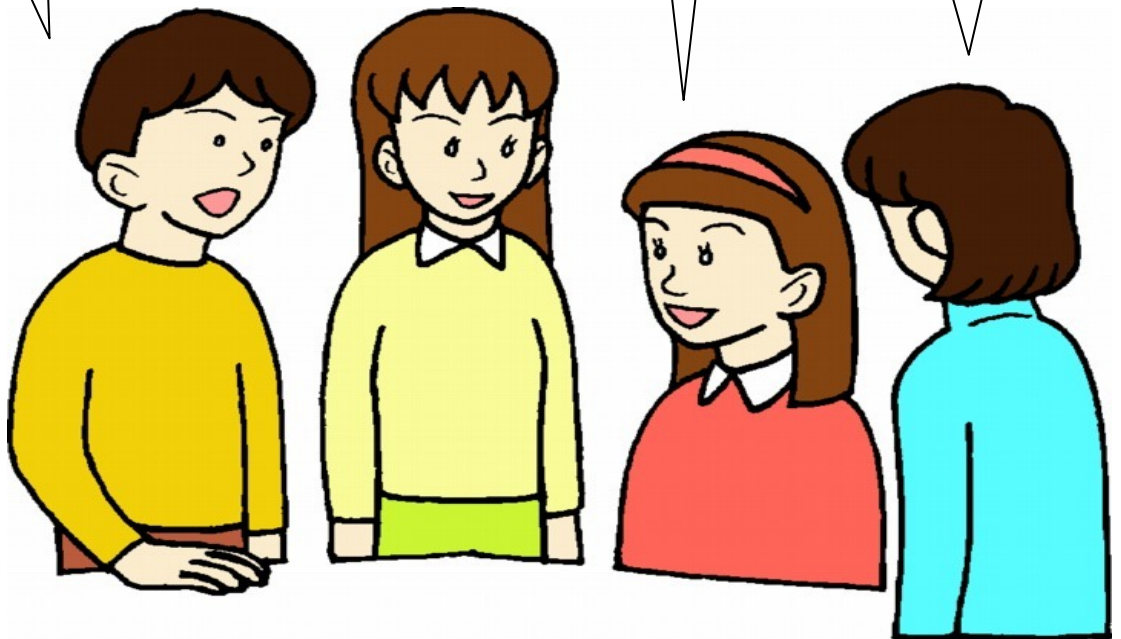


I wonder how different the middle school is from Elementary School?

I bet the building is going to be so big. I hope I won't get lost!

I wonder how much homework we are going to get?

Do you think the 8th graders will be mean to us?



**You're going to get lost everyday!
The 8th graders will put you in a locker!
The teachers are so mean!**

These are surely some of the things you have been told you will experience in 6th grade. We are here to tell you that the teachers aren't mean (they really want you to do well and be comfortable), you won't get put in a locker (there aren't even many lockers here) and even if you do get lost, it is very easy to find where you are supposed to be.

Sixth grade is an exciting year for you. You will be with the 5th graders, not only from your school, but from the other two elementary schools as well. This will be the first time that the kids you will graduate high school with will be together as one class.

You will also be allowed more freedom (no more lines in the hallway!). In addition to this freedom comes responsibility. As 6th grade students, you will be expected to treat all the people here (both students and adults alike) with respect. If you can follow this one rule, you will have an awesome time next year.

Clubs, recreation nights and new friends await you this you this fall at O'Rourke Middle School. Congratulations, you're heading to the Middle School!



Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How many classes are in one day?

A. There are nine 41 minute class periods each day.

Q. Do 6th graders get a study hall?

A. All 6th graders have a period at the end of the day called FLEX which is similar to a study hall.

Q. Is O'Rourke Middle School big?

A. O'Rourke Middle School has 2 floors. But the 6th graders are lucky enough to have their own hallway!

Q. How long do we have for lunch?

A. Every lunch period is a $\frac{1}{2}$ hr.

Q. Can we chew gum in class?

A. Some teachers allow it. Remember: no bubble blowing or gum snapping!

Q. Do we have our own lockers?

A. Each 6th grade classroom has either lockers or cubbies. If your classroom has lockers buying your own lock is encouraged.

Q. Do you have to take a foreign language?

A. In 6th grade you will get a chance to try all three languages (Spanish, French and German). You will be able to pick which language you want for 7th grade.

Q. What time does school start?

A. Students need to be in their homerooms by 7:45 AM.

Q. How long do we get between classes?

A. You will have 3 minutes to get to your next class.

Q. What is a demerit?

A. A demerit is a negative point a student receives for breaking a school rule. Demerits can be worked off with a teacher.

Q. Can we carry a backpack?

A. No, students leave their backpacks in their lockers/cubbies.

Q. Is there a lot of homework in 6th grade?

A. There is homework, but teachers do allow time to start homework in class as well as during flex time.

Q. What is Spirit Day?

A. Spirit Day is a fun day of activities for students as a reward for doing good work!

Q. Can I participate in clubs?

A. Yes, there are a number of clubs offered after school.

Q. Is there a dress code?

A. Dress should be appropriate for school.

Q. Are the teachers nice?

A. Yes! All the teachers are nice,

Hint #1

Get your parents to bring you to the middle school. O'Rourke Middle school is larger than your elementary schools and you need to find your way around so you are somewhat familiar with it on the first day. Finding your way around O'Rourke is pretty easy, since most of your classes are in the same hallway.

Hint #2

Talk to your friends and find out who will be in the same homeroom as you. You won't know if any of them are in your classes until you get your class schedule on the first day of school.

Hint #3

Seek out older students and ask them about the middle school. Ask about how easy is it to find the classrooms, how big the classes are and how teachers and counselors can make things easier for you. All these things will help you be confident when you start at the middle school.

Hint #5

Always remember that *everyone* really wants to help you make a good switch from 5th to 6th grade. Your teachers will be there to help you with your lock combinations, and to show you how to find your classrooms. Your guidance counselor will be on board to answer any questions, and provide you with support. The main office is there greet everyone coming into our school and to make sure that everyone is behaving respectfully.

Hint #4

Get up early the first day of middle school--after a good night's sleep. Anticipation is half the battle. It is good to approach this as a new adventure. You are going to meet students from other schools, and some of these are going to be friends for life



Attitude is everything--if you have a positive attitude you will succeed in middle school!



A 6th Grader's

First Day

at O'Rourke Middle School

WHEN: The first day of school for 6th graders will be a half day orientation on September 8, 2009.

WHAT TO BRING: You must bring a pencil. If you prefer, you can also bring your school supplies from the supply list you received over the summer or you can wait until the first full day of school.

Your first day will start out by getting on the bus in the morning. Upon getting off the bus, you will go directly to the cafeteria and be met by the administrators and counselors of the school. After a brief introduction, you will be directed to your homeroom to meet your teacher.

HOMEROOM: During homeroom on that first day, you will receive your schedule. Your homeroom teacher will go over your schedule and create an easy to read version.

Next, you will receive your student agendas. Your homeroom teacher will give you tips on how the agenda can help you be successful in the 6th grade. Finally, you will then briefly attend the classes on your schedule. A sample of a 6th grade schedule is below.

Schedule- 9 Periods

7:45 – 7:52	Homeroom	
7:55 – 8:36	Period 1	A Special Area Class (PE, Gen. Music, Chorus, Art, Health, or World Language)
8:39 – 9:20	Period 2	Class (Math, Science, English, Literature, or Social Studies)
9:23 – 10:04	Period 3	Class
10:07 – 10:48	Period 4	Class
10:53 – 11:34	Period 5	A Special Area Class
11:34 – 12:04	Period 6	Lunch – 11:34 each day – 2 lines, variety of food choices.
12:07 – 12:48	Period 7	Class
12:51 – 1:32	Period 8	Class
1:35 – 2:16	Period 9	Flex (study hall, extra help, band, or orchestra)
2:16 – 2:20	Homeroom	

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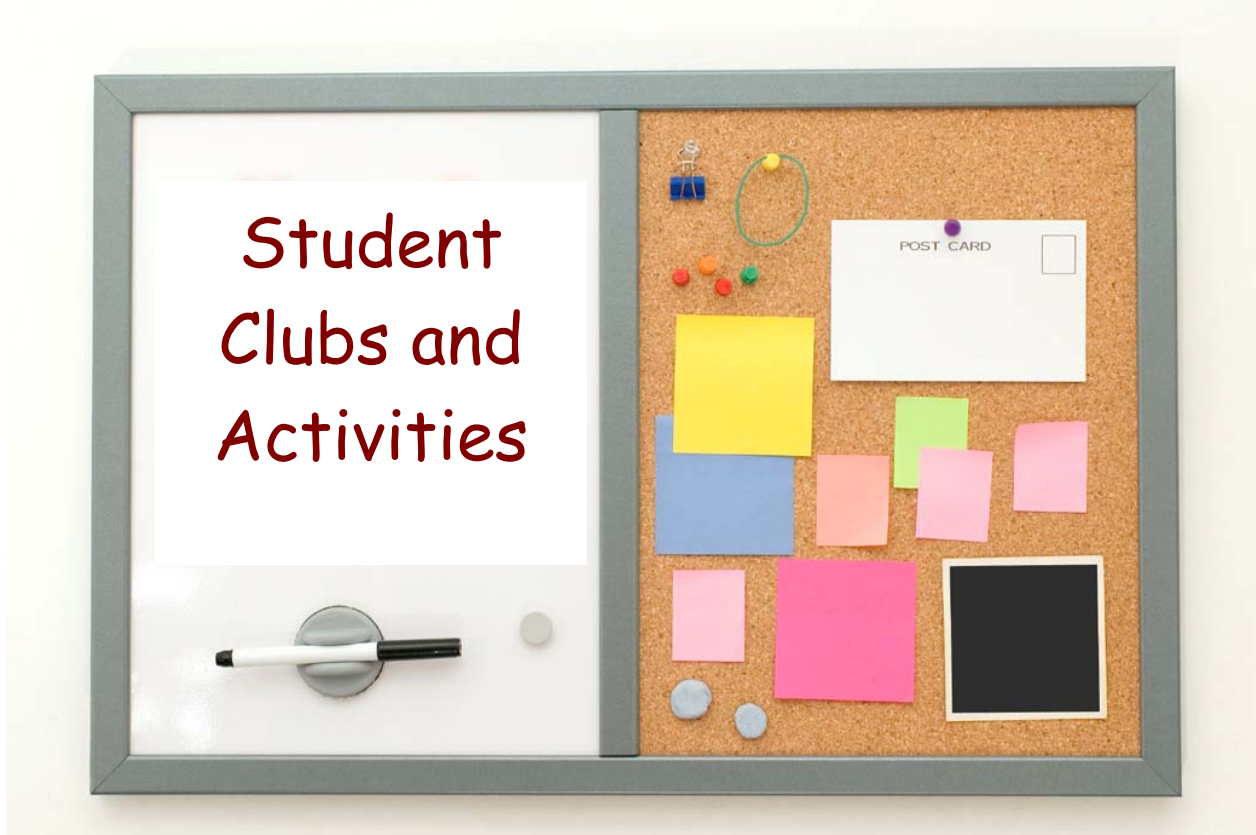
2:20- First Dismissal

2:28- Second Dismissal

2:32- Walkers and Bike riders dismissed

2:35- 3:20- Activity Period

(Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays)



Clubs 6th Grade Student can join:

The list of clubs changes from year to year. You will receive information about what clubs will be offered, or perhaps you will want to start a new one!

Art Club Gaming Club Math Club

Foreign Language Club

School Spirit Club Chess Club

Amazing Ways to Make Friends!

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Act friendly. Smile a lot, and be kind and courteous to others. Compliment people, without being annoying or fake. Always keep your head held high and never cross your arms over your chest or scowl, because that makes you seem mean and unfriendly.

Be yourself. It may sound cheesy, but the best friends are the ones who know the real you. Don't start wearing different clothes to make friends, just be yourself and see if they're friend potential. It really *is* what's on the inside that counts.

Just say hi! Go up to someone you would like to get to know and say "Hi", and offer a compliment or ask them a few questions like "Do you like Volleyball?". Smile, but don't be over-the-top friendly or happy.

Join a club or activity. As simple as it might sound, joining an activity group or club can really increase your friendship circle. Who knows, you might have a talent for something you aren't even aware of, and you may develop a new skill!

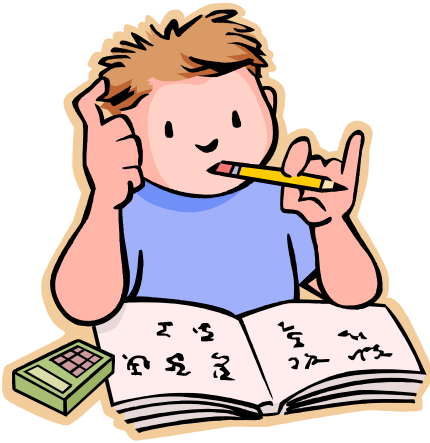
Lastly, be open to new experiences and new people. Keep your options open by being open minded! Middle school is a great place to make new friends!!

Stay out of "drama". Middle school is one of the places where drama is around every corner. One little thing said over IM or text message can ruin your reputation and destroy friendships. Try and be neutral if two groups of people who you're friends with start fighting. Stay away from people who start drama for the fun of it; you could end up getting hurt

Take care of yourself. Eat healthy, take regular showers/baths, and wash your face. A little hygiene can make all the difference.

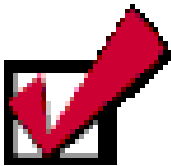
Don't gossip. If you say mean things behind a persons back, they **WILL** find out. Don't be a gossip, don't spread gossip.

Making the Most of Middle School



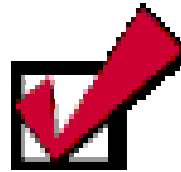
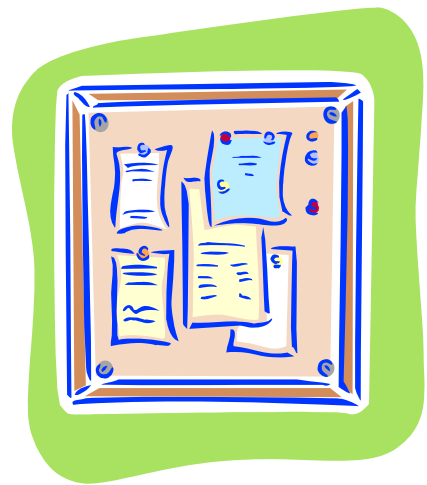
GET ORGANIZED

Schedule a time for homework and other activities.



TRY NEW THINGS

Join a club or activity that interests you.



MEET NEW PEOPLE

Get involved in your school life.



AVOID TROUBLE

Stay away from peer pressure and don't get involved in bullying behavior.

