

Revisions to the 2008-2009 Middle School Student and Family Handbook

Starting the Day:

- Once you enter the building in the morning, you are not permitted to leave without adult supervision.
- If a teacher finds you in an unsupervised classroom prior to 8:15AM, you will be expected to stay after school until 3:45PM as a consequence. This policy is in place to ensure that all students are safe and so that teachers can accomplish their morning tasks.

Lateness and Early Departures:

- **PARENTS AND STUDENTS PLEASE NOTE:** In order to be eligible to participate in extracurricular activities, students must arrive to school before 10AM and must have a note from a parent/guardian excusing the lateness. Latenesses due to school visits are exempt from this.

Dismissal

At the end of the day:

- At dismissal, you are expected to leave the building unless you are (1) meeting with a teacher, (2) have an approved after school activity, (3) are in the after-school program/enrichment class, or (4) are a seventh or eighth grader using the library or lab to complete schoolwork.
- Seventh and eighth grade students who want to use the library or lab or who have an instrumental lesson or tutoring session may leave the building if they have a signed permission form allowing them to do so. They must also sign-out and then sign-in at reception when they re-enter the building.

Advisory and Advisors:

Beginning of the year meeting with your child's advisor:

Advisors meet with each advisee and her/his family at the start of the year to introduce themselves as an advocate and liaison. This meeting occurs on the afternoon of the first day of school and provides all parties with an un-charged, friendly environment to get to know each other. It is also a chance to establish connections and set goals. This is especially useful for new families and for fifth and sixth grade families as the meeting provides families with a sense of what is new and what to expect. These meetings can also provide a chance for families to discuss any goals or concerns that they may.

On the first day of school, we run abbreviated morning schedule with students seeing all of their teachers. Following lunch and recess, the mini-conferences will begin. Advisors meet with the advisee and parents for 15 minutes. Faculty members who are not advisors are with kids at Houston Street doing structured games (a kind of mini field day). Parents pick their child up from Houston Street and leave with their child after meeting with the advisor. Students may also return to Houston Street following their conference and will be dismissed at 3:15PM.

Homework Blogs

Each Middle School teacher maintains a blog. The blog is a supplemental resource for posting homework assignments and for other class information. The blog is an important resource that students can use to help them stay on top of things. That said, every student is required to write down homework assignments in her/his agenda book. Students should write down these assignments in class when the homework is being

explained. Links to the blogs can be found at <http://blog.lrei.org/msnews/the-middle-school-digital-classroom/>.

Consequences for Late or Incomplete Homework

Daily Study Group for Seventh and Eighth Graders:

1. There are many demands on seventh and eighth graders and balancing these many demands can be complicated. When students fall behind in completing their homework, this can create significant additional challenges. While this is clearly not in the student's best interests, it can also have a negative impact on our ability to make sure that students are able to experience the full richness of the curriculum. In addition, it is also essential that students master the full range of study skills that are so important for their on-going success.
2. Seventh and eighth graders who do not have a completed homework assignment ready to hand in at the start of class will be expected to make up or finish this assignment in Study Group before leaving the building at the end of the day. There may be some instances where the nature of the homework and the class activity it is connected to, preclude the possibility of making up the assignment. In these cases, the student will receive no credit for the assigned homework and will still be expected to attend Study Group. Teachers will inform a student directly if s/he has to attend Study Group.
3. It is understood that work that is not ready at the start of class will be accepted per the requirements listed below, but will be graded as late.
4. Whether the work can be made up or not, the student will be expected to report to Study Group at 3:15PM. Students must report directly to the Study Group room and must not leave the building to get a snack. If there is a homeroom still in session, study group attendees should wait by the door until the homeroom is dismissed. The Study Group room will vary by day (a list of rooms will be posted in the classrooms) and the proctor will take attendance.
5. Study Group is mandatory for students who have not completed or finished an assignment. This will mean that students may miss or be late to scheduled afterschool activities. Coaches and directors may impose appropriate consequences for students who miss or are late to a game, practice or rehearsal as a result of having to stay after school to complete work.
6. While it is the case that many students have non-LREI obligations after school, we ask that families respect this policy and not ask that their child stay after on another day so that s/he does not have to miss a scheduled activity or appointment. We recognize that this may create a short-term difficulty for families, but we think that it is of fundamental importance that students meet these important school expectations first.
7. Study Group will run from 3:15-3:45PM. If the student has completed the assignment by 3:45PM, s/he will be dismissed. Students who have not completed the assignment will be expected to report to the library or lab where they can work up until 5:30PM to finish the assignment. All completed assignments should be left with the receptionist prior to leaving the building. Teachers will pick up these assignments in the morning. Students who are in Study Group for an assignment that cannot be made up will be expected to use this time to work on other homework. They will not need to hand anything in when they leave, but their attendance will be recorded.
8. Work that is not handed in by the end of the day on which it is due will not be graded for credit. Depending on the assignment, teachers may still request that this late work still be submitted.
9. The current policy that students who are absent have one extra day after the absence to get work in still applies.
10. We recognize that in some situations there may be extenuating circumstances that prevent a child from completing an assignment so that it can be submitted on time. Students/families should be proactive in communicating this to teachers and, if warranted teachers will make appropriate accommodations. We ask that you reserve these requests

for those situations that are due to circumstances that are truly outside of your child's control.

11. Families of students who choose not to attend an assigned Study Group will be contacted and will be expected to meet with the dean. Additional consequences may be assigned.
12. This policy and the reasons behind it will be discussed with students at the start of the year and periodically throughout the year. It is our belief that by taking a proactive approach we will prevent students from getting themselves into situations that can negatively impact on their school success.

Some Other Expectations

Dress Code – We ask that students remove hats when they enter the building (students who wear a head covering for religious or cultural reasons should communicate this to their advisor).

Unkindness and Exclusion – Each member of our Middle School community has an obligation to intervene when s/he observes classmates acting in an unkind manner towards others or when others are being excluded. Your teachers do their very best to be vigilant and to respond when these things happen, but when these behaviors do occur, they often take place in settings like recess, lunch and in the hallways. For students who are having a hard time socially, teasing and exclusion may be happening with increased frequency. While here are things that those who are being teased can do to make their situation better and while there are consequences for those who tease and bully, it is also important for those who witness teasing and bullying to try to move from being bystanders to becoming allies. An ally is someone who takes action when he or she sees unkindness and exclusion. Throughout your middle school experience, we will practice and learn how to be better allies to others.

Family Conferences

1. Each family—student and parent/guardian(s)—will have two formal conferences per year with their child's advisor. These occur on our Family Conference days (one full-day and one half-day) in the fall and spring. School is closed on these conferences days.
2. Students are expected to be active participants in these conferences and the conference is structured so that the students can share specific work samples and address specific areas of strength and challenge. Each conference runs about 30-40 minutes and advisors will contact families to schedule a mutually convenient time during one of the two conference days.
3. Advisors will help students prepare for these conferences.
4. The goal of these conferences is arrive at a holistic understanding of the student's learning experience. The conferences will address in a general sense the student's work to date in all of her/his classes.
5. Subject area teachers will contact families prior to the conferences if there are any areas of concern or issues that reflect a level of detail that cannot be communicated by the advisor.
6. For less critical information, subject area teachers will communicate to advisors any relevant specific information that they wanted the advisor to communicate at the conferences.
7. In advance of the conference, your child's advisor will parent/guardian(s) to get a sense if there are any particular issues that you would like to discuss.
8. If a specific issue comes up in a conference that the advisor cannot address, she/he will encourage you to reach out to the teacher in question who can best respond to the issue.
9. Teachers may contact families at other times if they feel that is necessary.
10. Families are encouraged to contact teachers if they have any concerns/questions.
11. The 2007-2008 Family Conference dates are as follows:

First Quarter: Friday, 11/7/08
Friday, 11/14/08

Third Quarter: Friday, 4/17/09
Friday, 4/24/09

Communicating with Teachers:

Establishing an open line of communication with teachers is a crucial component in helping to ensure that your child experiences success in school. Families are asked to make sure that teachers have the necessary information about their child's school experience so that they can effectively support their child and help them to succeed within the school expectations and norms. Families can make sure that teachers have this information by:

- Providing background on their child's prior school experience to date
- Providing regular and informal updates on successes and challenges
- Responding in a timely fashion (within 24 hours) to inquiries by teachers for information

Families can also expect teachers to:

- Provide regular and informal updates on successes and challenges
- Respond in a timely fashion (within 24 hours) to inquiries by families for information
- Make sure that their blog is up to date
- Send out notes of commendation when appropriate

Send out homework and behavior notification forms, cool down sheets and "I am concerned" notes when warranted (see the "Important Forms" section of the handbook)

Supporting Students:

On a regular basis, grade-level teams meet to discuss students and to explore how we can best meet individual needs in the context of the larger learning community. The grade-level team consists of teachers, learning specialists, advisors, a dean, the school psychologist, and the principal.

In grade-level meetings, the team seeks to develop the most complete picture of a student and to do this it draws on the collective experience of those who work with the student. This "portraiture" through multiple perspectives opens the door to the development of innovative strategies that draw on the lived experience of each of the student's many student-teacher relationships. These discussions, while not only useful for addressing issues relevant to a particular student, often generalize to approaches and strategies that benefit a whole group of students. This leads to a deeper and richer educational experience for all students.

In many schools, the involvement of learning specialists and school psychologists on grade-level, or support teams, is reserved for students who have been identified as "in crisis." At LREI, these individuals play an active role in all discussions. Their input is important as it provides another lens through which we can explore how to best meet an individual student's needs. Beyond being members of the team, they are active members of the Middle School community who make deep and lasting connections with students and who view their work in terms of the shared needs of our learning community.

The Middle School psychologist is Andrew Weiss and the learning specialists are Robin Shepard, Jennifer Haakmat and Susannah Flicker. If you feel that your child may need additional support, please speak with Mark or with one of the above members of the support team.