



August 2022

Dear Middle School Parents,

I am excited for the new school year to start and to welcome three new teachers to our MS community! At the time of this letter writing, we are in the process of hiring for the 6th grade science and math position. Samuel Palmer is joining the MS team as the new 7/8th grade science teacher. He has seven years of experience teaching MS and US science classes. Allie McBride is joining SGS as the new secondary art teacher; she has 11 years of experience teaching art. We are looking forward to a great year!

I am anticipating a year marked by a blend of innovation and academic rigor that challenges our students intellectually and gives them opportunities to learn, gain confidence, and create. We are continuing to follow guidance from the SRHD and DOH to safeguard our community in terms of Covid-19. We will also be applying lessons learned over the past two plus years to make the learning environment the best it can be for our students. Detailed information will continue to be shared by Jamie Tender, Head of School, and Ryan Peplinski, Covid Coordinator.

Important Documents

We are trying to provide as many forms as possible in PowerSchool (<https://ps.sgs.org/public/>). Please sign in with your parent (not student) password to access the forms and complete them as soon as possible. If you need assistance with logging in, please contact [Michelle Bledsoe](#).

- Please refer to the **Electronic Form and Permission Slip** Instructions and form checklist for a complete list of required forms. These are **due on August 19th**.
- **Student schedules** are available on PowerSchool (paper copy available upon request – contact Michelle).
 - Please email [me](#) if you have questions or need to discuss possible changes to your child’s schedule.
 - We are still making small changes with scheduling to balance classes and minimize conflicts, therefore schedules may look different by the time we get to August 30th.
- Documents are available online at sgs.org, Parents tab, then [Back to School Documents](#) (the password is *inspiring*)
 - Refer to the **Middle School Booklist 2022-23 to determine which books to order**. You can buy or rent books from numerous online sites including:

Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com, and Powells.com. Alternatively, there are many used book supply sites to try, such as abebooks.com, textbooks.com, and valorebooks.com. Please use the ISBN numbers we have provided to search for the correct edition. Books may be new or used, so long as they are the right edition, unless the instructor has noted otherwise on the list.

- **6th, 7th, and 8th grade supply lists**
- **Summer Reading lists**
- **MS Student Handbook**
- I encourage you to review the **2022-23 Calendar** and make note of holidays and teacher in-service days.

MS Policies and Procedures to Note

Communication:

- In Middle School, much of the digital communication between teachers and students/parents will be through **Edsby**, which interfaces with PowerSchool. Teachers will have a page for each of their courses with links for resources, class information, and homework details. This is where information about **upcoming assignments** is found. Edsby is a new tool for SGS and as of this letter writing, we are in the process of transitioning to this platform. *More details about parent and student use of Edsby will be made available in August.*
- Every week during the school year, a **MS Parent Letter** is posted on the **Middle School Information page** that will be linked on the SGS email update sent out at the beginning of each week. Please take a few minutes to read my letter for important information and upcoming dates.
- All MS students will be given a **school email** address. This will help facilitate access to online learning programs used in class, as well as communication and workflow between students and teachers. Student email information will be given to students during the first week of school. Thomas Hurst, our Director of Technology, will be sending PowerSchool parent account information at the beginning of August and PowerLearning parent account information shortly before school starts.
- **PowerSchool** is used by all parents to complete most forms and gives access to information about **completed assignments** and current course grades for 7th and 8th grade students and parents. In addition to showing graded assignments, PowerSchool also houses end-of-semester comments from teachers and assignment specific comments, where appropriate. I encourage 7th and 8th grade parents to log in to PowerSchool once a week with their child. As part of the 6th grade students' transition into Middle School, the 6th grade team begins the year by sending home grade updates every three weeks to show trends. This starts the year by placing emphasis on the importance of effort and growth, rather than the accumulation of points. Class teachers

and advisors guide their students and communicate regularly with parents about student progress.

- Grades are one of many ways to measure progress. In Middle School, we use them to prepare students for the more summative nature of high school. More important than any letter or number recorded in PowerSchool is the analysis you hear from your own child and from their advisor and teachers during conferences.

Student Organization: Structure is important for students as they are learning to manage and organize their own materials. We will provide every student with a paper planner and encourage them to use it. Sixth-grade students are expected to use the paper planner, and older students are given more freedom to try other systems. All MS students are issued a computer and are given instructions on setting up and maintaining organized digital folders and files as well as keeping any hard copies organized in their binder/folder.

MS Cell Phone Policy: Student phone use during class is at the teachers' discretion, phones are not to be out during passing periods (the time between classes is reserved for getting materials, taking care of personal needs, and getting to class on time), and students may check their phones for parent messages at the beginning of lunch and then put them away. Students may also check their phones for last-minute parent instructions when school is released at 3:15. We want to encourage kids to use their lunchtime for eating, socializing face-to-face, and moving around to burn off some energy. One of the great things about being an independent school is that we can make common-sense decisions in the moment and can work with students individually if there are special needs. If you need to reach your child during the school day, please contact Michelle Bledsoe at (509) 464-8742 or michelle.bledsoe@sgs.org, she will deliver your message. If you leave Michelle a voicemail or send an email, she will send a quick reply to let you know that your message has been delivered to your child. In an effort not to disturb classes in the Middle School, Michelle will often leave the message on a sticky note on a child's locker.

To come later in August

- We will offer an optional lunch program again this year. You will receive an email detailing the lunch choices and ordering procedures in a couple of weeks.
- Bus routes and schedules - Please note that the school driveway is crowded in the morning. If you are chauffeuring your child to school, please plan to arrive before 8:15am, drive cautiously on campus, and yield to the buses when they arrive. You may also choose to use the shuttle stop at the Fairwood Shopping Center. Details will be included in the bus mailing.
- For those who want join the MS cross country or volleyball teams this fall, practices will begin in early September for everyone who wants to participate. The coaches will be sending a detailed letter in August. You can also see Ryan's MS Athletic Letter for more details.

- Michelle Bledsoe will send out an email with information for students who want to set up their lockers early. We will schedule some times during the week of August 22nd when Michelle will be available to give out and help with locks. Note that magnets are okay, but stickers, markers, or anything else that cannot be pulled off easily are not allowed. Decorations should be in good taste. Please police your children's choice of decorations before you arrive.

Important upcoming dates

August 30 – first day of school for the Middle School begins at 8:20

- Back to School Parent Coffee in Peter's Garden – everyone is invited to meet Parent Ambassadors, new families, and catch up after the summer break
- Orientation day for the 6th grade students and parents – at least one parent is asked to attend the first half of the day to set the stage for a great MS experience (parents released at 11:45)

September 2 - Dragon Dance at 2:15 beginning on the Davenport Lawn - Parents are invited to attend this K-12 school kick-off tradition

September 15 – MS/US Parent Back-to-School Night at 6:30

September 21-23 – 7th grade trip to Camp Spalding (more info to be sent)

Final Notes - There is so much more that I would love to share, but this is already plenty long, so I will save something for my weekly parent letters. 😊 As issues come up throughout the year, please talk to your children if you have questions about what they are working on and follow-up with the teacher if you need more information. Parents and school faculty can be a strong team to support adolescents through this difficult age, if we communicate and support each other. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of assistance.

Go Dragons!



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