

Middle School Parent Guide

New Family Orientation

The day before school starts in the fall, students and families new to the OES community meet with administrators and other school representatives. It is a chance for them to tour the facilities and familiarize themselves with the Middle School, their new classroom locations, and to ask any last minute questions.

Opening Day Belltower Ceremony

On the morning of the first day of school, all students walk to the Belltower with their entire class behind a banner with their graduation year. After speeches and prayers, the bell is rung once for each year the school has been in existence. Each student then shakes hands with the Head of School. Classes begin immediately thereafter. Parents are encouraged to attend – it usually lasts about one hour. It is a wonderful community experience and a great way to kick off the year.

Opening Chapel and MS Parent Coffee

In late afternoon of the first day of school, the Middle School hosts a parent coffee just before the MS Opening Chapel. It is an opportunity to meet and chat with other MS parents. Parents are encouraged to attend both the coffee and the Opening Chapel, in which new members are welcomed with apples and a blessing is offered for teachers.

Parent Partnership Days

A day or two after school starts, all parents are asked to spend a morning with other parents, school administrators, and counseling and academic support staff. The goal of this day is to build a support net for our children by communicating with one another about our mission and programs, as well as getting to know one another better and setting some protocols for handling problems. Parents are an important part of the support net. You are asked to collaborate, define issues, and provide information about your child; you will be introduced to the parent pledge, laptop use, and disciplinary system, among other things. Please make every effort to attend Partnership Day. These dates will be on the website, as well as in a mailing to Middle School parents in August.

Back to School Night

A couple of weeks after school starts, parents are invited for an evening to run through a quick schedule of their child's day, including Gathering in the morning. This is a chance to see teachers face to face, though not an opportunity to address questions about your individual child.

Morning Gathering

The school day begins promptly at 8:00 a.m. with Gathering (except on Thursdays – the late start day). This is the time when our community comes together to share vital information, celebrate birthdays and other special accomplishments, and settle into the school day. We recommend that your child be at school by 7:50 a.m. to be at Gathering on time.

Advisory

Groups of students from each grade level are assigned to a teacher who meets with them regularly. Advisories are gender-based and usually consist of eight students. Your child's advisor will touch base with them approximately four times a week. Advisory is a place for students to relax, get to know each other, play games, go for walks, get an ice-cream cone, and do activities together. The advisor is a great person to call if you have concerns about your child.

Advisory Awards Ceremony

At the end of the school year advisory awards are given to every child as part of the closing exercises for the year. The advisor writes this award based on information gathered from team members, their own observations, and the student, using the themes of "head, hands, and heart." Parents are encouraged to attend this event. Each child comes to the front of the audience with their advisory to receive their award and should be dressed in nice clothing.

After School Program

The Middle School offers an After School Program that runs from 3:05 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. daily. A parent may sign up their child for the ASP on an "as needed" basis, or sign up for the whole year. It is monitored by adults under a director and is a safe place for children to have time to be physically active, socialize with friends, and study. Built into the program is 45 minutes of mandatory study hall when everyone studies at the same time. Those who are enrolled in the day's ASP receive a nutritious snack. There is a per hour fee for the After School Program which is billed to your monthly account. Parents check students in and out from the Middle School Commons.

Drop Off and Pick up from Middle School

Safety is of paramount concern when dropping off or picking up your child. There is a [published diagram](#) for drop-off and pickup and we ask that you please follow it. If you have any additional questions regarding drop-off and pick-up procedures, please contact Jon von Behren, our Director of Facilities, at vonbehrenj@oes.edu. Please know that if a child is not picked up after school by 3:20 p.m., they will be enrolled in the After School Program so we know where they are. **Please do not come early to pick up your Middle Schooler!** This creates a backlog of traffic for the Lower School parents who pick up their

children earlier than the Middle School, and besides, your child will like to socialize for a few minutes after classes end.

Middle School Messenger

The Middle School *Messenger* is the primary method of communicating with MS parents. This publication is posted on the website every Wednesday, and a reminder is emailed to parents. It is very important for you to read the *Messenger* and transfer important dates, times, and place information to your calendar.

Middle School PAL (Parent Alliance Link)

Middle School PAL meetings are a great way to stay connected to OES and other MS parents. The meetings are held from 8:15-9:30 a.m. the first Wednesday of each month in the MS Commons. MS PAL will host guest speakers, discuss upcoming OES events, and have grade-level breakout sessions at the end when time allows.

There are three Middle School PAL representatives who are available to assist you if you have concerns or issues and are not sure who to discuss them with. They will guide you to the right person. These reps will also arrange the service learning drivers, assist in finding chaperones for social events, lead the MS PAL meetings, etc. You will have the opportunity to meet them at the first PAL meeting in October.

Socials

There are two MS socials in the fall. The Halloween Social is typically held on campus in the MS Commons close to Halloween. It includes music, dancing, movies, games and food. The Ice Skating & Pizza Social is held in early December. Typically it is at a location near campus. Transportation to the rink and restaurant is provided by OES bus. There is also a social in February and April before the school year winds down in June, both of which are held in the MS Commons.

Humanities' Projects

Several times during the year the humanities classes may have projects where you help prepare a costume from home, make food, or participate in sharing travel experiences. Be sure to watch your child's syllabus so your child doesn't inform you the night before that he or she needs food or a costume the next day.

Conferences for 6th, 7th & 8th Graders

We have implemented some changes in our conference schedule and reporting. Conferences for all three grades will be held on Thursday and Friday, Oct 27th and 28th. These will be a twenty-five to thirty minute conference with all your student's teachers. The objective is for the teachers and parents to share information. Two conferences will run simultaneously, so some teachers will

leave midway through each conference in order to attend another conference. Notes will be taken throughout the conference, and these will be saved in the student's file in PCR.

A second Student-led conference will be held on January 26th and 27th – this is a thirty minute conference with all of your student's teachers and led by your student. Again, two conferences will run simultaneously within each grade level requiring that some teachers leave the conference midway to attend another. Notes will be taken and saved in the student's file in PCR.

ERB (Educational Record Bureau) Tests

ERB tests are standardized tests that are administered to provide both general and specific information about student achievement in reading, writing, vocabulary, and math. They are taken annually from 4th grade through 9th grade at OES. They are not used for grading purposes but provide a snapshot of a child's performance in verbal and math skills. Child care is provided both afternoons if students need to stay on campus after the ERB tests. These dates are published in the School Calendar.

WRAP Test (Writing Assessment Process)

Part of the ERB process is the WRAP test, a written component, which is taken by every Middle School student during his or her humanities class in the spring. Teachers use the WRAP rubric all year. Results can help teachers pinpoint areas that need attention in writing.

Sixth Grade Fall Trip

The focus of this trip is "Building an inclusive community." Students will celebrate who they are, both individually and in community with others, through activities and art work.

Sixth Grade Spring Trip

All of our sixth-graders attend an environmental program for one week through Portland Public Schools. This includes learning about and valuing others, as well as reinforcing environmental concepts through hands-on activities.

Freedom from Chemical Dependency (FCD)

FCD is a well-established and effective drug education organization that has been working with the OES community for six years. Two FCD educators spend a week on campus working with Middle and Upper School students, parents, and teachers in a variety of formats. Their work with students is clear, straightforward, developmentally appropriate, and geared toward empowerment. The bulk of their direct student work is done with seventh- and ninth-graders. Middle and Upper School parents are invited to attend a presentation and discussion session with the facilitators during their visit sometime in early March.

Sports

Your child will have the opportunity to participate in a number of team sports throughout the school year. OES has a “no-cut” policy so students of all abilities will have the opportunity to play and learn skills and sportsmanship. Practices and games are usually after school during the week; games and practices are not held on weekends. OES encourages every child to participate in the sports program. It is a wonderful way for students and their parents to meet and connect with other OES families. Students will be notified about signups during Gathering and parents should look for notices regarding the after school sports program in the Messenger and on the Middle School website.

Band/Orchestra/Choir/Jazz Band

Instrumental concerts are held two evenings per year, one in late January and one in late May. Concerts are required for students in band, orchestra, choir, and jazz band. Band, orchestra, and jazz band students must wear black pants/skirts, white shirts, and black shoes and socks. The shirts are given to students and charged to their accounts (usually about \$20). Choir students must wear dress-code-appropriate nice clothes (skirts/dresses, slacks, and collared shirts). There are also performances during the day during chapel – read the Messenger to find out dates! Band and Jazz Band perform in several festivals during the year, most of which occur during the school day. Parents whose students are involved will be contacted directly when these occur.

Grandparents' Chapel

Grandparents' Day is a special event, which provides an opportunity for your child to honor their grandparents within the context of a MS Chapel. After the chapel service, students have brunch with their grandparents in the Dining Hall. This is a memorable experience for both students and their grandparents.

Advent Service

During the winter season, OES holds an all-school evening program for the entire family. It begins in the chapel with a student instrumental program. This includes performances by the orchestra, band and choir, as well as songs performed by the Fifth Grade hand bell choir. There is a brief sermon given by the chaplains, followed by food, the OES jazz band and an Upper School student-driven art showing. This is a warm, wonderful night for all.

Parent Volunteer Service

- **Service Learning:** All middle schoolers will participate in service learning days in the school year through their advisory and their class. Parents are asked to drive the students to their projects.

- **Driver's Training:** You MUST go through parent driver training to be eligible to drive OES students anywhere. Training dates are usually in September and/or early October and will last approximately two hours. The certification is good for three years so we encourage all incoming Sixth Grade parents to attend the driving class.
- **“DEAR” Baking:** One day a week in the MS, everyone reads for a half hour of DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) time. Once a month, DEAR time is accompanied by DEAR treats. Parent volunteers bake treats for the students who successfully “dropped everything and read” for the prior three weeks. Students must start on time and read quietly for the 30 minutes to receive the treats. (We are careful to pay attention to the spirit of the rule rather than its letter when deciding who get treats!) Two parents bake in our Project Room at school from 8 to 10 a.m., and one parent bakes at home (dropping the treats off that morning by 9 a.m.) for a total of six dozen treats from each baker. Baking together is a great way to get to know other MS parents and learn about other grades in school. You can volunteer to bake once or several times throughout the school year.

6th Grade Science Night

In the winter, the science teacher will send information about Sixth Grade science projects and science fair. Most of the work is done in the classroom, though you may be asked to purchase specific supplies, depending on the subject of the group's experiment. This is an opportunity for Sixth Grade students to show their understanding of the scientific method as applied to specific research of their choosing. There will be about two months to complete the projects, and then students hold an evening Science Night so parents can celebrate the work of all students. All students are asked to attend Sixth Grade Science Night.

MBS - Virtual Bookstore

All Middle School texts and novels can be purchased through MBS, an online bookstore. MBS provides a list of books and will ship them to you with a return shipment label so books can be returned at the end of the year. Most books are sold at discounted prices, and there is the opportunity to purchase used books through MBS. At the end of the school year you may be able to return some books to MBS for partial credit.