

Frelinghuysen Middle School: Transitioning into 6th Grade

Frequently Asked Questions

Important Middle School Transition Dates:

- **Winter, 2018:** 5th grade Parents and Students complete 6th grade course selection form.
- **April, 2019:** 6th grade Placement Letters mailed home to 5th grade families.
- **Monday, May 20th** (6:30-8:30 pm): FMS Showcase for Incoming 5th Grade Parents and Students
- **Wednesday, May 22nd:** Thomas Jefferson and Normandy Park students visit FMS.
- **Tuesday, May 28th:** Alexander Hamilton students visit FMS.
- **Friday, May 31st:** Sussex Ave students visit FMS.
- **Mid-August, 2018:** Student schedules mailed home.
- **August 27th and 28th (9:00 am-12:00 pm):** FMS Open-House for all current and rising FMS students.

Most Frequently Asked Questions:

1. When is the official start and end time to the school day?

- Students are permitted into the school at 7:45 am when we unload our buses.
- The school day at FMS begins at 7:58 am and ends at 2:18 pm. Our school day begins with a fifteen minute homeroom that begins at 7:58 am and ends at 8:10 am. Students are expected to be in homeroom by 7:55 am and are marked tardy if they are not.
- The school encourages families to rely upon the buses as the primary mode of transporting students to FMS. Bus assignments are sent home to families in August.
- Parents who need to drop their child off are to do so in the parking lot rather than the bus lanes.
- The final class of the day ends at 2:18, at which time students go to their lockers and then board their buses for departure. Buses leave the FMS parking lot at 2:25 for their pm run. If parents need to pick up their student, they are to wait in the parking lot for the children to be dismissed.
- If your child participates in after school activities, sports, or clubs, the school offers a 4:00 pm late bus for transportation. If there is an away game and they return to the school later than 4:00 pm, the school will provide a bus for transportation home.
- For those of you looking for an after school program to supervise your child please look into the STARS program run by the Neighborhood House. It runs daily at FMS from 2:18 PM to 5:30 PM Monday through Friday and follows the Morris School District calendar. Program participants are given a snack and do homework, arts & crafts, sports and cooking. For more information and to register please contact the Neighborhood House 973-538-1229.

2. What is the "House System" and how is it structured?

- Frelinghuysen Middle School is divided into 3 Houses each made up of approximately 400 students in grades 6-8. Each House operates as a smaller 6-8 "school within the school". This more intimate "House" community is headed by a House Administrator and consists of a School Counselor and a teaching staff that works with and supports its students during their three years at FMS. House assignment is random and there is no difference in curriculum or instruction across the teams. Families are notified of their House assignment in August when schedules are mailed out.
- The House System is essential to FMS' success in creating a welcoming, supportive, and inclusive environment for all of our students. All courses and services that the school provides are available to students in each House. The three Houses are named:
 - House 1 - House of the Phoenix, Matthew Fabricant - House Supervisor
 - House 2 - House of the Tiger, Marc Gold - House Supervisor
 - House 3 - House of the Dragon, Aixa Garcia - House Supervisor

Although your child is placed in one of the three houses, he/she will still have an opportunity to interact with children from all houses during lunch, Physical Education, Art, Music, and Technology classes.

3. How and when will I find out which House my child is in?

- Families receive their child's House assignment and class schedule in an August mailing. The mailing also includes information about essential policies and procedures at FMS.

4. How may I be able to request that my twins, triplets, etc. are placed on the same team?

- During the winter of your child's 5th grade year, elementary principals will send your child home with a 6th grade course selection form. The form will also be distributed to you digitally. On this form, you and your child will indicate their first and second choices for World Language study (Spanish, Italian, French) as well as their desire to be part of our band, orchestra, and chorus ensembles. There is also a space on this form to request that twins or triplets be placed on the same team, and/or to request that your rising 6th grader be placed in the same House as a sibling that will be in grades 7 or 8 during the 2016-2017 school year.

5. What are "teams" and how are they organized?

- Each FMS House is comprised of a 6th grade team, a 7th grade team, and an 8th grade team. A sixth grade student in House 1 is on the "6-1" team. A sixth grade student in House 2 is on the "6-2 team", etc. Each team is comprised of a math, language arts, social studies, science, world language, and special education teacher. There is also one teacher that is assigned as the Team Leader that coordinates team information and assists in team meetings with parents.
- Teachers on a team share daily common planning time and the same group of students. This structure provides teachers with the time and opportunity to plan instruction, and organize supports and communications that facilitate student success.

6. Does my child receive a locker and what type of lock is needed?

- Every FMS student is assigned a locker near their homeroom that includes a built in lock. Students will receive their schedule, locker assignment, and locker combination in our summer mailing which goes out in late August. The children will have an opportunity to practice opening their locker at our two Summer Open Houses which are held over two days in late August. 7th and 8th grade student leaders will also be available at the Open Houses to help your child walk through their schedule and find their classrooms. We encourage all 6th graders to attend one or both days.
- FMS students are required to change for Physical Education, and are assigned a gym locker for their gym clothes. Our Physical Education staff provides each student with a lock for these gym lockers.

7. How do I stay informed about what is happening at FMS?

- Frelinghuysen Middle School is committed to communicating with all of its stakeholders in a timely and meaningful manner. Our goal is to partner with our parent community in supporting and celebrating student and community success, and collaboratively to problem-solve when we encounter challenges and obstacles. With this goal in mind, the FMS administration partners with the FMS HSA to deliver many of our regular communications. Here are instructions on how to access them:
 - **FMS School Website:** Make it a point to visit and bookmark the FMS website which is found at <http://www.morrischooldistrict.org/domain/9>. The website is updated regularly with our **morning announcements**, and it includes information about all things FMS.
 - **FMS Daily Bulletin:** Sign up for the **FMS Weekly Bulletin** for updates on the happenings at the school by going to <http://tinyurl.com/FMSBulletin2018> and completing the online registration form. This bulletin is sent out every Thursday and it communicates information about upcoming events, important dates, and updates regarding athletics and club programs.
 - **HSA Weekly Update:** The HSA issues its weekly update every Sunday, and it is a must-read! The update features a weekly message from Principal Uglialoro as well as a "Question of the Week" generated by parents. In addition, there is in-depth information on weekly events, student and team accomplishments, and important upcoming dates. Go to <http://fmshsa.com/> and enter your email under

the heading “**Sign Up for FMS Weekly E-News**” to subscribe to the weekly update from the HSA. Once you click “subscribe” you will begin receiving the updates.

- **Twitter:** Follow Principal Uglialoro on **Twitter** under his handle **FMS_PrincipalU**. Principal Uglialoro uses Twitter on a daily basis to communicate in real time about exciting things happening in FMS classrooms; to share useful resources for ensuring the success of middle school students; and to remind the community of important happenings. It is a great way to stay informed!
- **Honeywell Alerts:** You will receive school information via Honeywell Alerts, so be sure to sign up for them. The school uses these for special information such as school closings. If you are already signed up from your elementary school, you will remain on the server. However, please verify your information yearly to update your information. Directions are on the FMS website.

8. What is the structure of the school day and how long are class periods?

- Each school day consists of a 15 minute homeroom, a 20 minute lunch, and four 80 minute classes. In 6th grade all most classes meet on an alternating day basis except for English Language Arts which meets every day for 80 minutes.
- Cycle classes (Art, Technology, Music) meet every other day for 40 minutes.

9. Are classes leveled, and if so, what criteria determines my child’s placement?

- Math and English Language Arts courses are the only “leveled” courses at FMS. In 6th grade Math and ELA, students are placed in either an Honors level or “A” Level class.
- We rely on multiple measures to place your child in their Math and ELA classes. These include their performance on 5th grade common math and writing assessments, *iReady Diagnostic* scores, and their academic success in their 5th grade Math and ELA classes.
- More detail on the placement criteria is posted on our school website. To access this information, first click on “Parent Resources” at the top of the main page, and then follow the link to “Course Synopses”.
- You will be informed of your child’s 6th grade ELA and Math placement through a Spring mailing .

10. How am I able to find out about my child’s progress in his or her classes?

- A **Powerschool Parent Portal account** is created for the family of every student. The **Parent Portal** enables you to track your child’s progress in each of his/her classes in real time. This means that when you access your account, you can view your child’s grades on quizzes, tests, assignments, as well as their absences and tardies for each class. It is an incredibly valuable resource that we strongly encourage every parent to access.
- **Accessing Your Account:** The school district will mail you your PowerSchool Parent Portal username and password during the first week of school. You will need to use that information to activate your account. Once you have done so, you will use this account throughout your child’s middle school years.
- If you are noticing many missed assignments, we encourage you to reach out directly to the classroom teacher or to the school counselor to develop a plan to keep your child on track.
- **Canvas** is the Learning Management System used by teachers in the Morris School District in grades 6-12. Teachers maintain a calendar of upcoming assignments/tests/quizzes for their class on Canvas and many use it to post resources, copies of readings/assignments, and notes from class. Your child and you will receive accounts in September that you can activate in order to view and access this information for each class on your child’s schedule.

11. How are progress reports and report cards made available?

- At Frelinghuysen Middle School, progress reports and report cards are accessed **digitally** through the **PowerSchool Parent Portal**. We notify parents at the midpoint and close of each marking period that progress reports and report cards have been posted on the Parent Portal. Parents are then able to print out the report cards from the Parent Portal if they wish.
- Parents can “opt in” to having a paper copy of the report card mailed home at the end of each marking period by notifying the Guidance Department at the start of the school year.

12. Who can I contact if my child has behavioral problems, academic issues or classroom/teacher concerns?

- You should consider the **school counselor** as your child's best advocate. The school counselors can help you and your child navigate many different issues, and they are also experts in problem solving and developing action plans for your child.
- A second point of contact for you if you are concerned particularly about your child's academic progress is the **Team Leader**. You will learn who your child's Team Leader and Guidance Counselor is when you receive their schedule.

13. What do I need to know about the 1:1 Chromebook program at FMS?

- The 1:1 Chromebook program is an essential aspect of teaching and learning at FMS. Every student is issued a Chromebook at the start of their 6th grade year that they will retain throughout their three years at FMS. Students are required to bring them to school each day charged and to take them home at night. Along with the Chromebook, the students are issued a padded carrying case and a power cord. We speak regularly with students about how to care for their Chromebook, and we have staff in the building who assist with minor repairs to the devices.
- Appropriate use of the Chromebook and the teaching of positive digital citizenship is an essential aspect of our 1:1 program at FMS. Our school was recently nationally recognized as a "Common Sense Media" school based on the programs and curriculum we have in place to educate our students about safe, productive, and healthy use and consumption of digital devices and media.
- We believe that every child having a device in the classroom presents opportunities for educators to design truly innovative learning experiences for our students which often permit them to work at their own pace and their own level of readiness, and to extend learning beyond the school day and the classroom walls.

14. How many minutes does my child have to change from one period class to another period class?

- The students have about 3 minutes to change classes. For most teams, for most classes, the rooms are very close to each other. Three minutes seems like a small amount of time but it is sufficient for students to get from one place to another. In September and October the teachers are sensitive to 6th graders' confusion or fluster, and understand students may not be on time. Part of the advantage of being on a team is that there will be many students moving with your child through the day from one class to the next. For example, in Language Arts there may be four or five students going with your child to science class so they can go together. They do find their way.

15. How does my child join band, orchestra and/or Chorus?

- In February, elementary principals will be sending students home with 6th grade course selection forms. There will be a space on these forms for you to indicate your desire to join band, orchestra, and/or chorus. Students are able to participate in more than one ensemble. Our band, orchestra, and chorus teachers have already visited the elementary schools to encourage 5th graders to join their ensembles.
- We highly encourage you to ensure your child's participation in one or more of them. Our programs are outstanding and the evidence is overwhelming that participating in music programs supports academic and social/emotional success.

16. How does my child select the World Language they want to study?

- FMS offers students the option of studying Spanish, French, or Italian throughout their three years here. In February, elementary principals will be sending students home with 6th grade course selection forms on which students will indicate their first choice and second choice for language study.
- FMS does its best to get every student his 1st choice for language study, but due to the popularity of Spanish and our current levels of staffing, it is not always feasible. In these cases, students will receive their second choice.

17. How can my child get involved with after-school activities?

- We strongly encourage our 6th grade students to get involved in at least one after-school activity. We know that in this critical year it is essential to develop and strengthen as many positive connections between the students and the school as possible. That being the case we make every effort to provide all of our students with a broad and diverse selection of activities to choose from. There are four types of afterschool activities and your child is encouraged to get involved.
 - **FMS Student Clubs:** These clubs which are run by FMS teachers and span the year include Model United Nations, Technology Student Association, Select Choir, Wind Ensemble, Chamber Orchestra, Jazz Band, Performance Dance, Chess, Art club, Yearbook, *Falcon Press* Newspaper, and more. They typically meet once a week for the year and **are open to all students at no cost.**
 - **HSA After-school Clubs:** These clubs are run in 6-week sessions three times a year by Frelinghuysen teachers and are open to all students. Students simply need to go to the teacher running the club, get a permission slip, and sign up. The idea is to encourage students to try something new and to explore their interests. Some of the exciting clubs that have run this past year include *Minecraft, Ceramics, Film Production, and Dance.* Registration is \$35 and scholarships are available for families in need.
 - **Athletics:** FMS is proud to offer its student-athletes a full complement of boys and girls athletic teams during the fall, winter, and spring seasons. Due to the level of interest, many of the sports do involve tryouts. The nurses will discuss in greater detail the steps involved prior to participation.

18. What does lunch look like at FMS for a 6th grader?

- FMS 6th graders will have a 25 minute lunch between 10:07 and 10:58. They can bring a lunch from home or purchase one in the cafeteria.
- If they wish to purchase a lunch from the cafeteria they can pay daily or deposit money into their cafeteria account. Parents/Guardians may send in a check made out to FMS cafeteria.
- During the warmer months students will have the opportunity to enjoy lunch outside in the new Outdoor Eating Area.

19. When will find out my child's bus stop, bus number, and pick up time?

- The MSD Transportation Department mails bussing information home during the second week in August.

20. Who do I call when my child is going to be absent?

- At FMS, we have an attendance secretary, Ms. Levato. Please call Ms. Levato directly at (973) 292-2200, x 8066 (option 5) to report your child's absence.
- Please provide medical documentation for any absences that exceed 3 days.

21. What paperwork must be submitted in order for my child to try out for/participate on an FMS athletic team?

- The process for getting your child approved to participate in a sport at FMS requires 1) the completion of all necessary medical documentation (including a physical) and 2) the completion of the online registration process by the established deadlines. A detailed breakdown of this process (including the forms) are available on the FMS Website under Athletics.

21. What immunizations are required by New Jersey law for all students starting 6th grade? When do they need to be completed by?

- The Tdap and the Menactra immunizations are required for all students that are 11 and starting 6th grade.
- If your child has already turned 11, then the immunizations must be completed prior to the first day of school. If your child has turned 11 by August 9th and we have no evidence of their updated immunizations, then they will not get a schedule until these are received.
- Please call the FMS Health Office at (973) 292-2200, x 8052 for questions regarding later birthdays (after mid-August).