

September 26, 2019

Dear 8th Grade Families,

Transitioning Back to School

With just over a month of school behind them, the 8th graders have figured out their school-day routines and are working hard to meet the expectations of their teachers. This year, they are navigating the campus with ease, and they are approaching their courses with greater confidence. In the next several weeks, I will begin visiting 8th grade classes; it is always exciting for me to watch as the students engage in the learning process with their classmates and teachers. If you are able to come for Visiting Day (October 14), you will get to see the dynamic learning environment that Burroughs students so enjoy — I hope you will be able to make it!

Community Service Week

As you know, the 8th grade community service project is coming up soon — October 22 through October 25. During service week, the students need to meet in front of the main office by 8 am each morning. Students will return to Burroughs by 3 pm each day and can be picked up from school at that time. During community service week, the only work that 8th graders will be responsible for completing is a journal writing activity that will be introduced during their English classes. While serving at their assigned agencies, students must refrain from wearing short shorts, leggings (unless they are worn with a long shirt or skirt), flip flops or other open-toed shoes, shirts that expose their shoulders or stomach, and shirts with any writing. Some agencies have specific dress code requirements that extend beyond those presented here, and all of them are posted on the bulletin board for the students to review. Since students must adhere to the dress code for their agency, I ask that you please make sure that your child is properly attired. In line with our *Technology Acceptable Use Policy*, students will not be permitted to use cell phones or other electronic devices while participating in their service projects. Students who violate this policy while serving in the community can expect to receive detention time. Lastly, students should plan to bring a lunch during service week (no nuts!), though during the course of the week, some students may suspend bringing lunch if they learn that their agency will provide it.

If you are driving students during service week, please remember that morning drivers need to meet their groups at 8 am in the front hall and afternoon drivers need to meet their groups at the assigned agency at 2:30 pm. As a matter of safety, please refrain from using your cell phone while transporting students to/from their service agency.

Assessments and Planning Ahead

The Burroughs two-test rule has been in place for a very long time, and it is intended to keep students from being overwhelmed by tests, papers, projects and presentations that are due (or happening) on the same day. While it is called the two-test rule, it applies to any two major assessments. When students learn that they have more than two major assessments scheduled for the same day, they have the option of adjusting their assessment schedule so they have no more than two on a given day. To move an assessment, students must speak to their teachers well in advance of the assessment's originally scheduled date, and the two of them will decide on a mutually agreeable alternate date. Please encourage your child to keep a detailed planner and to check Canvas regularly; this will help your child know if more than two major assessments have been scheduled for the same day. (This policy is also stated in the *Student-Parent Handbook*.)

Finding Kind Program

The social dynamics in 8th grade can be extremely powerful for students. As they navigate Burroughs, it remains important for them to remember that JBS is a thriving community where kindness and mutual respect are expected at every turn. As you experience 8th grade with your child, please actively encourage the pursuit

of new friend relationships and adamantly discourage discussions or behaviors that have the potential to exclude or hurt others.

With that in mind, please know that on Tuesday, October 29, during periods 2 and 3, the entire 8th grade will view *Finding Kind*, an internationally recognized documentary that brings awareness and healing to the negative effects of girl-against-girl relational aggression. Though the film is geared toward girls, we believe that by watching this film, our boys will both gain insight into the social aggressions that sometimes impact adolescent girls and become mindful about the influences they might have on the girls' experiences. As well, viewing this film may help the boys to more carefully consider the ways in which they engage with each other and the impact that their behaviors and attitudes may have on their peers. That week during the 8th grade seminar classes, the students will debrief *Finding Kind* and discuss ways to interrupt relational aggression when it occurs. By attending the presentation of *Finding Kind* on the 29th and by participating in the discussions during seminar class, we hope our 8th graders will recognize the importance of choosing (in the filmmakers' words) "to take a stand [about relational aggression] and help create change."

Additionally, the JBS Counseling & Wellness Department and I are inviting you, the parents/guardians of all 8th graders, to join us in Haertter Hall at 9:40 am on October 29 to view the documentary. It is our hope that by partnering with you, we can work together to help students better understand the importance of acceptance and kindness, thereby positioning them to create a class culture that is even more inclusive and welcoming. Though the 2019-2020 calendar indicates an evening opportunity to view *Finding Kind*, please note that we are canceling that viewing opportunity.

Preliminary Reports and Parent Conferences

As you may know, Burroughs is closed in October for two full days (this year, October 10 and October 11) so teachers can write mid-semester (preliminary) reports for each of their students. During the report-writing period, teachers compose detailed and unique comments about the students in their classes, providing specific accolades, recommendations, updates and/or information about developing concerns regarding academic progress. These preliminary reports are intended to summarize the work that students have completed during the first couple months of the school year and provide insight into their academic habits, social interactions, class participation and approaches to learning.

The preliminary comment reports are distributed to the parents/guardians of 7th and 8th grade students during the fall parent conference with the academic advisor. These conferences will happen between mid-October and early November. Many 8th grade advisors began scheduling conferences during Mini School. If you haven't yet scheduled this meeting, feel free to contact your child's advisor to set up a mutually agreeable conference time.

After conferencing with the advisor, I urge you to speak with your child about the preliminary reports. Together, review each of the comments – celebrating the aspects of your child's report that indicate positive growth and discussing strategies for moving past challenges and onto more meaningful learning and exploration. Enjoy this process!

Upcoming Events

Please remember that Blue & Gold Weekend begins on Friday, September 27. On Friday afternoon and throughout Saturday, Burroughs and MICDS teams will face off against one another in competitions across many fall sports. After most of the Friday competitions have ended, we will have a student picnic at 6:15 pm, followed by a pep rally and bonfire; these events will end at 8:45 pm. I hope that you and your child will attend some of the Blue & Gold Weekend events!

Also remember that you are invited to campus on Monday, October 14 for Visiting Day. On this day, you will pick up your child's class schedule from the front office and will have the opportunity to observe your child's morning classes. Following 4th period classes, feel free to join us for lunch in the Quad. (If bad weather forces us inside, we won't be able to accommodate parents in the dining room – sorry!) To RSVP for the lunch, please contact [Debbie Drummond](#).

Sincerely,

[Julie Finnie Harris](#)

Principal, Grades 7 & 8

314-993-4045 ext. 219