



May 1, 2022

### WELCOME NEW SSA Middle School Families!

We are excited to have you joining the Shady Side Academy community for the upcoming school year! This letter and the attachments are to give you some information about the upcoming school year activity choices that you and your child will be making.

Shady Side Academy Middle School requires students to participate in at least one athletic or movement activity each year within the three seasonal choices. Many of our Middle School students compete in at least two seasons and many participate on a competitive team all three seasons. Our faculty, as well as a fine group of adults from around the SSA community coach our SSA Middle School teams. Participation at the Middle School level allows your child the opportunity to find something exciting whether they have played a particular sport for a number of years or this is their first time. Our primary objective regarding athletics is to help students develop fundamental skills and learn the rules, strategies and hopefully a passion for a sport that will carry on for many years. Winning is always exciting and important to our players and coaches alike but it is not necessarily the primary goal, particularly at the Middle School level.

Our athletic/activity period runs from 2:20–3:35 p.m. every day and this afternoon time-period is a co-curricular extension of the academic day, so we expect students to fully participate on their team or in their activity every day. Students can learn important lessons through team participation: sportsmanship, leadership and the idea that one can “win and lose with dignity and grace.” These objectives apply to all afternoon activities at the Middle School, whether participating on a competitive or a non-competitive athletic team, the Science Olympiad team or up on the stage performing in the musical.

There are a few things to consider when you and your child are making your choices for each of the three seasons:



- Select a sport or activity based on your child's interest to learn or continue to participate in a sport. While the need to be around friends is important to the kids, it should not be the primary reason for choosing a sport if s/he has little interest.
- Consider your family schedules. Would other family obligations prevent your child from giving 100% effort to their SSA team? If commitment to an outside team or activity is very important to your child and there are frequent conflicts between the SSA team schedule and the outside commitment schedule, please consider choosing a non-competitive activity so your child will be finished every day at 3:35 p.m.
- We have a "no-cut" policy from any team at the Middle School but there are instances when we must limit the number of students on a particular team and instead of having a tryout we limit the total numbers on the teams. This also allows us to provide a safe environment for proper instruction and supervision of skills and techniques. We have had to cap ice hockey, squash and in some cases basketball once the maximum number has been reached. Last year we moved Girls' Tennis to the Fall to match what occurs at the Senior School and to prevent students from not being able to participate. It is very important to fill in the registration form in a timely manner when you receive the notification to sign up! Once the maximum number has been reached on a team, students are placed on a waitlist and can be moved onto the team roster as other individuals move off throughout the school year. Once again, when the registration process is open, completing the registration process early will help to solidify a position for your child in a particular activity. If the numbers for any team are not enough to support that activity, we reserve the right to discontinue that activity for that particular season.
- When choosing a competitive team in which there are games or meets, please note the games are not optional. Illness, injury, a family emergency or academic issues determined by your child's academic teacher are acceptable reasons for missing a game or a practice. Excessive absences from practices, just like in the classroom may put them behind in learning the necessary skills and may reduce the child's playing time during the season.
- The Exceptional Proficiency Exemption request is an option for those students in seventh or eighth grade who are exceptionally proficient in a particular activity outside of school. The description and directions for applying are a part of this packet of information. Students in the sixth grade may petition for an Exceptional Proficiency exemption in special circumstances. Students must still fulfill the one-season Middle School athletic requirement.

A few other additional notes to keep in mind as you make selections:



- The Middle School athletic policy for athletic games: 6th graders will play no more than one game per week (even if they participate on a 6/7/8th grade team) and 7th and 8th grade teams will play a maximum of two games per week.
- A note regarding Science Olympiad in the winter season: Students can choose Science Olympiad as their sole choice during the winter term, which meets daily during the 2:20–3:35 p.m. time slot. There are also students who choose an athletic team option as their primary activity in the winter AND participate on the Science Olympiad team by taking part in the team's regular Saturday meetings from late September through April.
- Students and families always have the opportunity to make changes to their athletic choice during the first week of each season, depending on space availability.

The link for registration will be posted on May 7 on the Newly Enrolled Families page. Please use the Activity Description document (in a separate attachment) for some dinner-time conversation prior to the registration opening so that your child's choices are decided on ahead of registration opening. If you have any questions about any of the options or the process, please ask!

Sincerely,

David Vadnais

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