

# AVONWORTH MIDDLE SCHOOL

## GUIDE BOOK



**Avonworth Middle School**  
**256 Josephs Lane**  
**Pittsburgh, PA 15237**  
*Phone: (412)366-9650*  
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*[www.avonworth.k12.pa.us](http://www.avonworth.k12.pa.us)*

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# Welcome to Middle School

## *Dear Parents/Guardians and Students:*

Welcome to Avonworth Middle School, a fantastic learning environment. Avonworth Middle School maintains high expectations both academically and behaviorally. This guidebook shows that AMS is filled with exciting and unique learning opportunities.

I believe that Middle School is such a crucial developmental stage of a student's life. Our dedicated and experienced staff will make the time spent here the best possible learning environment. Please take a moment to examine this resource and ask any questions that you may have.

I look forward to a great school year.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Michael Hall, Principal

## **What is a Middle Schooler?**

~ Anonymous

He is noise and confusion.  
He is silence that is deep.  
He is sunshine and laughter,  
Or a cloud that will weep.

He is swift as an arrow.  
He is a waster of time.  
He wants to be rich,  
But cannot save a dime.

He is rude and nasty.  
He is polite as can be.  
He wants parental guidance,  
But fights to be free.

He is aggressive and bossy.  
He is timid and shy.  
He knows all the answers,  
But still will ask "Why?"

He is awkward and clumsy.  
He is graceful and poised.  
He is ever changing,  
But not to be annoyed.

What is a middle schooler?  
I was asked one day.  
He is the future unfolding,  
So do not stand in his way.

## BELL SCHEDULE

### Grade 7 & 8

8:00-8:41	Mod A
8:44-9:25	Mod B
9:28-10:09	Mod C
10:12-10:53	Mod D
10:56-11:36	Mod E
11:39-12:19	Mod F
12:22-12:52	LUNCH (G)
12:52-1:28	ACTIVITY (H)
1:31-2:12	Mod I
2:15-2:55	Mod J

## ~ STAFF ~

### Front Office Staff

Michael Hall, Principal  
Kaitlin Remensky, HS/MS Assistant Principal  
Aaron Pellicano, School Counselor  
Judi Bevilacqua, Secretary to the Principal

### Instructional Staff

**ELA 7** - Amanda White & Sarah Flower - 7  
**Life Science** - Kelly Hansen - 7  
**Math 7 Core** – Ahmed Affaneh - 7 & Julie Tullar 7  
**World Cultures** - Sheila Applegate - 7  
**Learning Support** - Ross Addler –7

**ELA 8** - Natalie Barkovich & Kathy Galecki – 8  
**Algebra 1 / Math 8** Catherine Potter - 8  
**Algebra 1 / Math 8** - Brody Zangaro - 8  
**Civics**- Jason Smith - 8  
**Physical Science** - Megan Campedel- 8  
**Learning Support**- Katie Straley –8

**Art 7 & 8** - Kerri Villani, Sara Croft  
**Band** - Will Guess  
**Computers Science/ STEM 7** - Nicole Findon  
**Family & Consumer Science** - Rachel Sebolt  
**Foreign Languages** - Roxana Samaniego-Grider, *Spanish*  
Melissa Reagle, *Latin*  
Stacy Hart, *French*  
Jia Li, *Chinese*  
**Music and Chorus** - Sasha Martin  
**Physical Education & Health** - Mike Mancuso, Sherah Rothman  
**Tech Ed 7**- Bill White

**GATE** - Melissa DeSimone

### Additional Staff

**Director of Student Services** - Dr. Ashlea Rineer-Hershey  
**Psychologist** - Kristina Busti  
**Director of Athletics** - Andrea Patton  
**Nurse** - Colleen Barcaskey

## ~ PROGRAMS OF STUDY ~

### Grade 7

- Full Year Courses: English Language Arts 7, Math Core
- Semester Course (80/per day): Life Science, World Cultures
- Full Year Electives: Band & Chorus
- Single Mod 6-Week Courses: Art, S.T.E.A.M., Computer 7, Health, Physical Education,
- Double Mod 6 week course : Family and Consumer Science 7, Technology Ed 7, Music 7

### Grade 8

- Full Year Courses: ELA 8, Math 8 or Algebra,
- Day 1, Day 2 Schedule (80/per day): Physical Science, Civics
- Single Mode 6-Week Courses: Art, Music 8, Physical Education, Latin, Spanish, French & Mandarin Chinese
- Double Mod 6 week course : Physical Computing, Family and Consumer Science
- Full Year Electives: Band & Chorus

## ~ COURSE DESCRIPTIONS ~

### **7th Grade Core Classes**

#### *English Language Arts 7:*

The English Language Arts 7 curriculum focuses on students finding personal relevance, making historical and modern connections, and identifying authentic purposes for the work that they will do. First and foremost, students will strengthen and deepen their reading, writing, and analytical thinking skills. Scholarly, diverse, and engaging class readings provide students with the opportunity to connect to texts and explore universal themes through small and large group discussions and debates. Students will hone their writing skills by analyzing an author's craft in literary fiction, nonfiction, poetry and prose, and applying their findings to their own writing. Writing assignments ask students to address a variety of purposes and audiences, from argumentative essays to art critiques, with a focus on authentic application. Writing will be strengthened through the study of phrases, clauses, pronouns, sentence structure, and vocabulary, as well as Latin and Greek root words and affixes. The reading, writing, and thinking skills developed in this course set a strong foundation for the work required in other classes as well as the real world.

#### *World Cultures 7:*

Explore Ancient World Cultures through both primary source text, non-fiction readings and modern literature. Students will explore the geography, history, and cultures of ancient Greece, Rome, Japan, Africa, Southwest Asia and Central Asia in addition to cultural rituals and biomes around the world to set the context. Units involve project-based approaches aimed at connecting students with multicultural and authentic audiences. Students will be able to analyze and interpret ancient World Cultures text, art and lived culture in a historical context while applying their insights to benefit themselves and their community in the modern world.

#### *Math Core 7:*

This course is dedicated to teaching the Common Core Math 7 Content. Students learn these high level math concepts through both traditional methods and problem-based instruction. Students are tasked with grappling with content and developing deeper understanding through the application of these skills. This curriculum is developed to strengthen basic math skills as well as prepare the students for Math 8 and /or Algebra.

#### *Life Science 7:*

This course focuses on the study of life. Life Science is taught through a variety of methods ranging from fully developed project-based projects to short lecture to lab activities. Areas of study include: cellular structures/functions, genetics, ecology, and simple and complex organisms. Students will use hands-on activities including laboratory investigations and computer/internet activities to facilitate learning. Students will be expected to use critical thinking and scientific methods to solve problems. Students will complete projects ranging from three dimensional models to web pages and oral presentations. Students will also complete a comparative study of animals using dissections.

## **8th Grade Core Classes**

### *Civics:*

In Civics 8, students take a project-based approach to develop citizenship skills that will allow them to fully participate in our American Democracy. Students learn about the creation of our nation's first government, changes it has undergone and the continued efforts to form a more perfect union. Students examine both past and present civic issues including the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the on-going Civil Rights movement, and the three branches of government. Students will practice their rights and responsibilities as U.S. citizens through respectful discourse, collaboration, and both written and oral presentations. Students engage in authentic demonstrations of citizenship to develop an understanding of the diverse perspectives that shape our democracy, how the government works, and how they can influence it.

### *Physical Science 8:*

This course will provide students with an understanding of basic physics and chemistry. Half of the year entails detailed physics, including topics of forces and motion, electricity and magnetism, and light and sound. The remainder of the year focuses on aspects of chemistry, such as the structure of matter, uses of materials, and interactions of matter. Science 8 is taught through a variety of methods ranging from fully developed project-based projects to short lectures to lab activities. Emphasis is placed on hands-on learning with students gaining personal experience in the subject matter. Students will also learn about the historical influence of scientific advancements. Physics and chemistry are wide-ranging disciplines that deal with many aspects of science and other non-scientific disciplines.

### *Math 8:*

This course is dedicated to teaching the Common Core Math 8 content. Students learn these high level math concepts through both traditional methods and problem-based instruction. Students are tasked with grappling with content and developing deeper understanding through the application of these skills. This curriculum is developed to strengthen basic math skills as well as prepare the students for Algebra 1.

### *Algebra 1:*

This course is dedicated to teaching Algebra 1 content. Students learn these high level math concepts through both traditional methods and problem-based instruction. Students will continue to apply, learn and master the language of math and its numerous applications to our daily lives. Students will take an end of year state "Keystone Exam" at the completion of this course.

### *English Language Arts 8:*

The English Language Arts 8 curriculum is designed to strengthen reading, writing, and analytical thinking skills. Students will engage with a variety of fiction and nonfiction texts, making connections to American history through foundational documents and important time periods. Students will hone their writing skills by analyzing the author's craft in literary fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and prose. Writing assignments ask students to address a variety of purposes and audiences, and knowledge of writing will be strengthened through the study of grammar and sentence structure. Word study and instruction in Latin and Greek root words and affixes



will allow students to build vocabulary. Students will demonstrate understanding and mastery of the Pennsylvania Common Core Standards through formal and informal writing assignments and presentations, class discussions, and projects.

## **Specials Courses**

### **ART**

*Art 7 & 8:* These courses include experiences involving basic drawing techniques, introductory art forms, and all media. Upon completion of this course, students should have developed knowledge of basic drawing skills, including the representation of form and space using a variety of drawing tools. Students should also have begun to discover their own aptitudes and interests in art activities, thus encouraging the continuation of their art education.

### **BAND**

*Band 7 & 8:* This course will provide students with an opportunity to improve technical skills on a selected band instrument and to perform music that will explore the concert and marching band repertory.

### **CHORUS**

*Chorus 7 & 8:* This course offers students an opportunity to become an active participant in a performing choral group. Special care is given to the nurturing and development of the younger voice and the changing male voice. Work in this course prepares the student for the more demanding musical compositions performed at the high school level. Participation in both day and evening choral performances is mandatory.

### **COMPUTERS**

*Computer 7:* Students in this course will gain experience in both computer science and programming. The primary resources used are CodeCombat and Khan Academy. Students will experience text-based coding, using Python, both on the computer and 'unplugged'.

*Physical Computing 8:* Physical Computing is an approach to computer-human interaction design that starts by considering how humans express themselves physically. Physical computing takes a hands-on approach, which means that students will spend time writing programs in order to code tangible objects, such as robots and drones. As a culminating project, students will learn how to assist those in need in their communities by engineering and programming assistive devices.

*S.T.E.A.M. 7:* This course focuses on the engineering design process, design thinking, and media creation. Students will be using the engineering design process to work through real world challenges and video game development. We will use various media platforms to learn about branding processes and the creative development process.

## **FAMILY CONSUMER SCIENCE**

The objectives of this course are: to become familiar with the Food Pyramid and prepare foods from each group; become familiar with recipe writing; to identify and know how to use large and small kitchen equipment; to learn basic sewing skills – buttons, hooks, eyes, snaps, and hemming stitches; to prepare a sewing booklet; and to focus on the positive part of personality development.

## **FRENCH**

*French Foundations 8:* This course will introduce students to the French language and culture, thereby giving them the information necessary to choose which foreign language or languages they wish to study in the future.

## **HEALTH**

*Health 7:* The focus of 7th Grade Health revolves around guiding students to make responsible decisions from high-risk behaviors, specifically sexual activity, drugs, and alcohol. Students will learn the importance of healthy relationships, the benefits of abstinence, and discover the differences between active versus passive decision making. Students will also learn about taking responsibility for their actions and understand the risks and consequences of those actions. Students will work on sharpening their communication skills and practice refusal skills to prepare themselves for their bright future.

## **LATIN**

*Latin Foundations 8:* This course will introduce students to the Latin language and culture, thereby giving them the information necessary to choose which foreign language or languages they wish to study in the future.

## **MANDARIN CHINESE**

*Mandarin Chinese Foundations 8:* This course introduces students to the basics of the Mandarin Chinese language and culture thereby giving them the information necessary to choose which foreign language or languages they wish to study in the future.

## **MUSIC 7**

This is a beginning guitar course that will focus on the fundamentals of music reading, theory and history. Students will learn basic skills on the guitar (chordal accompaniment, simple melodies, strum patterns) and study famous guitarists. Students will create by playing popular songs and composing their own chord progression. The activities in this class answer the all encompassing essential question: How do musicians generate creative ideas?

## **MUSIC 8**

This course is designed for a student to create, perform, and compose a Broadway-style musical. The students will each compose their own original song. Create a ticket for the show. They will also write a portion of the script and create a trailer video. All of these mini-projects will combine into a presentation of the musical to the "investors". Students will use their prior

knowledge of music, writing, and acting to fulfill these tasks. The course will increase your enjoyment and understanding of the music you already know, and introduce you to less familiar. The students will also integrate other subject areas when composing their musicals.

### **PHYSICAL EDUCATION 7**

Students interpret how rules affect and govern team, dual, and individual sports. They will analyze the benefits of lifetime activities and fitness. Cooperation and responsibility are illustrated within teams in competitive and recreational activities. Proper use and care of equipment are taught and practiced, as well as safety, rules and procedures.

### **HEALTH 7**

The focus of 7th Grade Health revolves around guiding students to make responsible decisions from high-risk behaviors, specifically sexual activity, drugs, and alcohol. Students will learn the importance of healthy relationships, the benefits of abstinence, and discover the differences between active versus passive decision making. Students will also learn about taking responsibility for their actions and understand the risks and consequences of those actions. Students will work on sharpening their communication skills and practice refusal skills to prepare themselves for their bright future.

### **PHYSICAL EDUCATION 8**

Basics and tactics of team, dual, and individual sports are taught and practiced. Students assess the benefits of lifetime involvement in physical fitness activities. Proper use and care of equipment is emphasized.

### **SPANISH**

Spanish Foundations 8: This course will introduce students to the Spanish language and culture, thereby giving them the information necessary to choose which foreign language or languages they wish to study in the future.

### **TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION 7**

This course will introduce students to all aspects of technology education. Students learn the safety in the wood shop and how to use a variety of technologies including 3d modeling and design software. The main focus will be to become proficient with CAD. During this course, students will then be presented with a challenge to solve that will incorporate the use of automated technology, either 3d printing or laser engraving, and present their solutions to an authentic audience. Students will work independently as well as in small groups on various problem-based activities.

## ~ CLUBS ~

*The list below is not intended to be a complete list of middle school clubs. New clubs are formed each year as student interests dictate. The clubs listed below are the ones that seem to maintain membership from year to year. For information about new clubs, please check the district website or contact the middle school office.*

### ***Art Club***

The Art Club exists to help students enhance their art skills and develop an appreciation of the arts. Club activities include individual and group projects such as school enhancement projects, as assigned by the art teacher. Membership is open to all middle school students.

### ***Builder's Club Description:***

Builders Club is the largest service organization for middle school students, with more than 45,000 members worldwide. Builders Club is uniquely built on an important principle: Amazing things happen when the students take the lead! Members develop self-awareness as they discover their passion to serve, desire to lead, and ability to engage and collaborate with others. Members develop strong social and emotional skills that impact their ability to respond to life's challenges with kindness and compassion, promoting a more caring and inclusive school climate. For Builder's Club members, service to school and community becomes a way of life!

### ***Environmental Club***

The Environmental Club works to address the environment both locally and globally. The club investigates many environmental issues such as wet weather, sustainable energy, and activities to be done at our school.

### ***Literary Magazine***

The Literary Magazine will work with the Yearbook Advisor and exists to enhance the writing abilities of students. Membership is open to all middle school students.

### ***Student Ambassador***

The Student Ambassador club was founded with the goal of giving students the opportunity to make a difference in the world while exposing them to activities of international significance. Students also attend a field as part of the World Affairs Project. Students create a project on a specific topic and then go to the World Affairs Council of Pittsburgh.

### ***Student Council***

Student Council provides an opportunity for middle school students to become involved in leadership activities to improve the school and community. Club activities include a variety of service projects for the school and community, including Children's Hospital Auction in December; and sponsorship of several assemblies, dances, and activities to promote school spirit and student involvement. Membership is open to students with a 2.0 grade point average and good discipline and attendance records.

### ***TSA***

The Technology Student Association (TSA) is an organization which promotes the use of technology, science, math, design, engineering, and public speaking outside of the classroom. Students create projects based on specific activities in order to compete against students from other schools on regional, state, and national levels. Some of these projects include: structural

challenge (where students must build bridges), graphic design, video game design, RC car, Dragster Design, Prepared Speech, Extemporaneous Speech, and Environmental Challenge. TSA also provides students with an activity to help them transition into high school, since TSA is available at both middle and high school levels. Often, currently high school students mentor middle school students with their projects, creating a collaborative working environment.

## ~ ACADEMIC INFORMATION ~

### *Academic Calendar Summary*

The school calendar is divided into two semesters. In each semester, there will be two nine-week grading periods. Report cards will be issued to the student at the end of each nine-week grading period. Progress reports will be mailed to parents/guardians at the middle of each nine-week grading period.

### *Honor Roll*

High honor roll and honor roll for the Avonworth District are based on an accumulated quality point average according to the following scale:

- High Honor Roll is a Quality Point Average of 3.50 or higher.
- Honor Roll is a Quality Point Average of 3.00 – 3.49.

### *Testing Information*

- Pennsylvania State System Assessments (PSSA) in reading and mathematics are administered in the spring for sixth, seventh, and eighth graders.
- Pennsylvania State System Assessments (PSSA) in writing is administered in the fall for eighth graders.

### *Grading Scale*

A: 90 – 100%

B: 80 – 89%

C: 70– 79%

D: 60– 69%

F: 59 – 0%

## ~ ACTIVITY INFORMATION ~

Students must meet attendance, citizenship, and academic eligibility requirements to participate in extracurricular programs. Please refer to the Student Handbook and Discipline Code for specifics.

### *Athletics*

Note: Avonworth Middle School students participate in a Northgate School District sponsored athletic program: swimming. Please see the Athletic Director for details.

### *Athletic Physicals*

WPIAL rules state that a physical must be done no sooner than six weeks before the start of each sport season. This means that if your child plays a sport, he/she will need a physical. If your child plays more than one sport, a recertification form must be completed. Sports physicals are performed at AGH Suburban Campus at a cost of \$10 per physical. They are done in June for the fall season, October for the winter season and February for the spring season.

Your private physician may also do a physical exam. The form is the same, and the rest of the packet still needs to be completed and returned to the Athletic Director or middle school office. Your child can pick up information packets in the middle school office during the two-week sign up period before the day of the sports physical, or you can download them off the website at your convenience.

## ~ POINTS OF INTEREST~

### **Grade Level Teaching Teams:**

Teachers in each grade level work closely together as a team. Common planning/meeting time is arranged so that teachers are able to plan integrated units, discuss instructional strategies, communicate with parents, and work on meeting the needs of all students in their specific grade level.

### **Ambassadors:**

Available to all students who transfer to Avonworth Middle School anytime during the school year, Ambassadors are student volunteers who work with the principal and school counselor to help new students make a successful, less-stressful transition into AMS. New students will be given an opportunity to ask questions, tour the school, and receive an orientation to the policies, procedures, and activities offered at Avonworth.

### **Middle School Socials:**

Roughly four times a year, the Middle School Parent Network sponsors socials for all Avonworth Middle School students. Students have the option of dancing to popular music with a DJ, participating in basketball and/or volleyball in the middle school gym, or having a snack and playing a few quiet games with friends in the middle school cafeteria. The socials are chaperoned by parents, teacher volunteers, and the principal. Notices about upcoming socials are announced on the daily announcements and on the district website. All chaperones must have valid Act 33/34 and 151 clearances. Clearance forms are available in the middle school office.

## ~ PARENT NETWORK ~

The Avonworth Middle School Parent Network was developed to support the educational process for our children. We do this by promoting the welfare of children and youth in home, school, and community; bringing into closer relation the home and the school so that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the education of children and youth; developing, between educators and the general public, united efforts that will secure for all children and youth the highest advantages in physical, mental, and social education; educating parents on issues of concern to students and educators; providing resources for the staff to enhance the tools they have available; and promoting positive social activities for students in a safe environment.

The Parent Network is an independent, volunteer group that is dedicated to supporting the students, teachers, parents and administration of Avonworth Middle School.

**Sponsor fun activities for students**, including in-house socials, skating party, pool party, and pancake breakfasts.

**Provide fundraising opportunities**- Fundraising is used to support the current 7th and 8th grade students.

**Support teachers** – The teaching team for each grade has a liaison in the Parent Network who provides assistance for events and resources as needed. Parent Network sets aside \$300 per year per grade for supplemental resources requested by teachers. Parent Network ends the school year with a Teacher Appreciation Day to thank teachers for their hard work and dedication.

**Support the Middle School administration** – Staff the Scholastic Book Fairs and assist with the Eighth Grade Commencement.

**Facilitate communications between parents and school** – Meetings are held to give the opportunity to discuss topics with the principal and other parents. Communication is made via the middle school newsletter each month with important information concerning upcoming events.



## **DIRECTORY INFORMATION**

**Avonworth Primary Center (412) 366-7171**  
**1310 Roosevelt Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15237**

**Avonworth Elementary School (412)366-7170**  
**1320 Roosevelt Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15237**

**Avonworth Middle School (412)366-9650**  
**256 Josephs Lane, Pittsburgh, PA 15237**

**Avonworth High School (412)366-6360**  
**304 Josephs Lane, Pittsburgh, PA 15237**

### **Avonworth Board of School Directors**

Yu-Ling Cheng-Behr, President  
Vicki Carlson, Vice President  
Danielle White, Treasurer  
Beau Blaser, Board Member  
John Brandt, Board Member  
Kristin Thompson, Board Member  
Kathryn Monti, Board Member  
Patrick Stewart, Board Member  
Amy Tokar, Board Member

### **Avonworth School District Administration**

Dr. Jeffrey Hadley----- Superintendent  
Dr. Jillian Bichsel-----Assistant Superintendent  
Jennifer Sheirdan -----Director of Fiscal Management and Support Services  
Dr. Ashlea Rineer-Hershey -----Director of Student Services  
Brandon Gary-----Director of Technology and Information Systems  
Brant Colomarino -----Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds  
Andrea Patton -----Director of Athletics  
Dr. Keera Dwulit -----High School Principal  
Dr. Michael Hall-----Middle School Principal  
Dr. Kaitlin Remensky-----Assistant Middle/High School Principal  
Dr. William Battistone-----Elementary School Principal  
Dr. Scott Miller -----Primary Center Principal  
Mr. Robert Eastwood-----Assistant Primary/Elementary Principal

The Avonworth School District will not discriminate in its education programs, activities or employment practices, based on race, color, national origin, gender, religion, ancestry, disability, union membership, or any other legally protected classification. Announcement of this policy is in accordance with state and federal laws, including Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Employees and participants who have an inquiry, complaint of harassment or discrimination, or who need information about accommodations for disabled persons, should contact:

Dr. Ashlea Rineer-Hershey, Director of Student Services  
1310 Roosevelt Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15237 (412) 366-7171 X1901