

# Friends School of Wilmington Middle School Handbook

The Middle School Handbook supplements FSW's Family Handbook, aiming to provide tools for navigating our Middle School program with clear expectations, helpful information, and success strategies. Please ensure you also read the Family Handbook for a more in-depth understanding of our school's comprehensive policies.

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# Developmental Designs

Our Middle School program embraces [Developmental Designs](#), a comprehensive approach that addresses the academic and social needs of adolescents. By providing structures that cater to the whole child, we enhance academic growth while acknowledging and supporting the social and emotional aspects of adolescence, rather than limiting them.

## **Meeting basic needs of adolescence**

Relationship: / want to connect to other people.

Autonomy: / want to be independent.

Competence: / want to succeed in what I do and feel like a worthwhile, significant person.

Fun: / want to have a good time!

Safety: I need to feel safe, able to take risks.

## **The WHY behind mixed-age Advisory**

Mixed-age Advisory fosters connections across grades in our middle school, creating a sense of belonging for every student. 6th graders get to know 7th graders, and 8th graders mentor 6th graders, establishing trust and unity. By being their authentic selves, students can freely learn, grow, and thrive. Building trusting relationships among students is paramount at Friends School.

## **The role of the Advisor**

Our expert middle school teachers take on the responsibility of guiding and supporting their advisory students, creating a genuine home-base for each individual. In these advisory groups, practical skill-building and goal-setting activities are integral, helping to establish a positive and constructive atmosphere.

Each day, advisory sessions serve as a platform to set the tone for the day, review both behavioral and academic expectations, and foster a sense of belonging and accountability among the students. Through these dedicated efforts, our students benefit from personalized guidance and continuous support, promoting their overall growth and success throughout their middle school experience.

## **Intentionality in forming groups**

Each year the middle school team creates advisory groups with thoughtful attention to meeting each student's academic, social, and emotional needs. Advisory groups may sometimes remain familiar year to year, while other times changes are made to best meet the needs of our current cohorts of students.

## **Goal Setting and Social Contract**

At the start of each year, students collaborate with their advisors to set SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, timely) academic and social goals. These goals form the foundation for our Social Contract, a community agreement that guides our interactions and values throughout the year.

# Taking Responsibility & Building Self Control

In addition to the consequences outlined in FSW's "Community Expectations" (Family Handbook, pages 25-27), in our middle school program we believe in logical consequences that are respectful, realistic, and relevant to students' behavior. We provide pathways for students to take accountability for their actions, including the following approaches:

**Fix It on the Spot:** For minor mistakes that require immediate correction, students are encouraged to fix or redo the error right away. This empowers students to learn from their mistakes without fear of judgment or blame, promoting personal growth and responsibility.

**Loss of Privilege:** Loss of privilege is used when students are unwilling or unable to responsibly exercise a privilege given to them. The consequence is relevant to the misbehavior, and privileges related to the misbehavior are temporarily removed. Once students are ready, privileges are restored to provide opportunities for growth.

**Take a Break (TAB):** TAB is used to give students a chance to move away from a situation to regain composure and self-control. It is both a loss of privilege and an opportunity for the student to calmly regroup before rejoining the group. Teachers model and practice self-control techniques with students to help them make the most of this time.

**Taking a Break (TAB) Out and Back:** In some cases, students may struggle to take a break within the classroom setting, leading to disruptions. If TAB is not effective in the classroom, students may be taken to another environment, such as another classroom, outdoor learning space, or an administrative office, to regain self-control.

In all cases, teachers check in with students to reflect and make a plan for success. By implementing these respectful and relevant consequences, our middle school program seeks to guide students towards understanding their actions, taking responsibility for them, and fostering positive growth and development. In the event of behavior patterns, teachers, advisors, the school counselor, and administrators will work alongside students and families to create a plan for success.

# The Whole Child

## **Monday Morning Middle School Meeting**

All middle school students and teachers begin the week together in Monday Morning Meeting. This time is used to share announcements, celebrations and plans for the week ahead.

## **Meeting for Worship**

Every Wednesday, middle school students come together for a meaningful and introspective experience called Meeting for Worship. Rooted in Quaker traditions, this serves as a time to pause, reflect, and set intentions. During Meeting for Worship, students have the opportunity to process events and share ideas, while engaging with an open-mind. Through this collective moment of stillness and contemplation, students develop a deeper understanding of themselves and others, fostering a culture of empathy and respect within our school community.

## **Fridays are for FUN!**

Recognizing the need for fun on Friday afternoons, our middle school schedule rotates between monthly FLEX, Service Learning and Field Trips.

## **FLEX**

Friday Leadership Experiences (FLEX) is a program of teacher-facilitated activities that encompass a wide range of engaging options. From cooperative and strategic games to art activities, Science Olympiad, creative writing, and outdoor adventures, FLEX offers diverse opportunities for our students. These experiences not only encourage students to take on leadership roles but also enable them to explore and discover new interests. FLEX serves as a platform for students to connect with their peers, fostering a sense of camaraderie and community within our school.

## **Service Learning**

Each month, students actively participate in service projects that extend their impact beyond the school walls. These projects take place on campus, in our nearby neighborhoods, and within the greater Wilmington community. The scope of service ranges from tutoring younger students, tending to our school greenspaces, to participating in clean-up efforts. Additionally, we collaborate with local organizations whenever possible, working together on larger and more impactful community initiatives.

Through these service experiences, our students develop empathy, compassion, and a strong sense of social responsibility. Engaging in meaningful service projects fosters a deeper connection to the community and empowers our students to make positive contributions to the world around them.

## **Field Trips**

Field trips play a vital role in our educational approach, enhancing students' understanding of themselves and the world. Each month, we incorporate experiential learning through field trips that align with various subjects, bridging classroom knowledge with real-life experiences. These day trips not only enrich learning but also serve as a stepping stone for spring overnight trips, allowing students to practice being off-campus in a safe and supported environment. To participate in field trips, students are required to meet our community expectations and maintain good academic standing. If a student encounters difficulties in meeting these criteria, their

advisor will engage in open communication with the family to collaboratively develop a plan for support and growth.

### **Buddies**

Our school fosters strong bonds through our Buddy program, which pairs students from different grades together. Sixth graders are matched with first graders, seventh graders with second graders, and eighth graders with third graders. Buddy activities are diverse and meaningful, ranging from reading together to attending performances, participating in service learning projects, enjoying cooperative games, and attending whole school events as partners. Our middle school and lower school students flourish in this collaborative work, benefiting from the mutual support and camaraderie that the Buddy program provides.

### **Chromebooks & Technology**

We embrace technology as a powerful tool for innovative and meaningful learning experiences. We also understand the importance of moderation and face-to-face communication. We actively encourage the use of books, newspapers, and handwriting to ensure students have access to diverse learning resources and engage in tangible experiences that promote critical thinking and creativity. By finding the right balance between technology and traditional methods, we create a holistic learning environment that empowers our students to excel academically and develop essential skills for the modern world.

#### [Technology Acceptable Use Policy](#)

Upon entering middle school, each student is provided with a chromebook to support their learning journey. To ensure its functionality, students are responsible for charging the chromebook each night at home, arriving at school with a fully charged battery every morning.

During class time, chromebooks are to be used only as instructed by teachers and stowed away when not in use. We trust our students to handle their chromebooks with care, taking responsibility for keeping them safe and in good working condition. In the unfortunate event of a chromebook breaking, it becomes the family's responsibility to replace it with a comparable computer.

### **Google Classroom**

Our Middle School team uses Google Classroom to post class assignments. This is a great resource for families to check on students' work.

### **Communicating absences and make up work**

For planned absences, students should check in with teachers beforehand and make necessary arrangements. It is also their responsibility to follow up on missed work upon return. In the event of an unexpected absence or illness, students should inform their teachers upon their return. Teachers understand these situations and will make adjustments to assignment due dates to accommodate the time missed. Our supportive approach aims to help students stay on track with their academic progress.

# Academic Life

## **Building Work Habits**

Our middle school program builds independence and ownership in academic work. Staying proactive with assignments is crucial as it ensures that in-class activities remain meaningful and well-timed. By taking charge of their academic responsibilities, students can actively participate in class discussions and activities, making their learning experience more engaging and relevant. We believe in fostering responsibility and accountability in our students' academic journey. As part of this commitment, we have a homework policy that encourages timely submission while understanding the importance of flexibility and compassion.

**Timely Submission:** We value punctuality and recognize the importance of turning in assignments on time. Students are encouraged to complete and submit their homework by the specified due date.

**Grading Deductions:** In the event of late submission, a small percentage of points may be deducted from the assignment's overall score. This deduction serves as a gentle reminder of the significance of meeting deadlines.

**Extensions and Special Circumstances:** We understand that unexpected circumstances may arise, preventing students from submitting their work on time. In such cases, students are encouraged to communicate with their teachers as soon as possible to discuss the situation. Extensions may be given for valid reasons, such as illness or family emergencies.

**Teaching Opportunity:** As educators, we view late homework as a valuable teaching opportunity. It allows us to have discussions with students about time management, planning, and the consequences of actions in a supportive and understanding manner. Our focus is on learning and growth rather than punitive measures. We encourage students to take responsibility for their actions and work together to find solutions. Teachers may provide guidance and support to help students catch up and succeed academically.

**Pattern of Late Submissions:** If a student demonstrates a consistent pattern of late submissions, teachers and parents will collaborate to identify potential underlying issues and implement strategies to support the student effectively.

By implementing this homework policy, we aim to create a nurturing and supportive learning environment that encourages students to develop strong work habits, time management skills, and a sense of responsibility, all of which are essential for their academic and personal growth.

## **Lunch Office Hours**

We are committed to providing ample opportunities for support and fostering a culture of academic assistance and growth. Recognizing that students may occasionally need additional guidance or clarification, we have established "Lunch Office Hours." Each middle school teacher offers a designated day per week from 12:15 PM to 12:50 PM for students to catch up on assignments, seek help, or enjoy quiet reading. It's a safe and supportive space fostering academic growth.

# Additional Information

## **Visitors on Campus**

Outside of normal drop-off and pick-up times, any arriving on campus must stop at the Front Office, located in the Preschool Building. This includes dropping off food/supplies, picking up a student for an appointment, or a late arrival. Do not drive directly to Middle School buildings; instead a member of the Front Office team will contact middle school teachers as needed.

## **Food on Campus**

For the well-being of our students, it is essential they come prepared having had a healthy breakfast before arriving at school and bringing a nutritious lunch from home each day. We discourage food trading to ensure balanced meals and a positive eating environment.

To promote healthy eating habits, we request that caffeinated beverages, gum, and excessive candy not be brought onto campus. If these items are brought to school, students will be asked to discard them.

## **Reducing Waste**

To lessen our environmental impact, we encourage families to purchase food with limited waste and utilize reusable food storage containers whenever possible. Everyone on campus is encouraged to compost and recycle appropriate items, with trash as a last resort.

## **Birthday Celebrations**

We love celebrating birthdays! Families who wish to share birthday treats must inform the student's advisor in advance. Birthday treats should be modest and easily distributed into individual servings.

## **Cell Phones & Smartwatches**

During the school day and school-related events, students may not use personal cell phones unless permitted by a faculty/staff member. If students have phones for after-school communication, they must be turned off and stowed away in lockers or backpacks. Visible or in-use cell phones will be taken to the front office and may be retrieved by a parent/guardian at the end of the day or following day; they will not be released directly to students.

Smartwatches are permitted solely for timekeeping purposes. Usage for social media, messaging, or games is not allowed. Students using smartwatches for such purposes will follow the same procedure as with cell phones.