

MIDDLE SCHOOL

STUDENT & FAMILY

HANDBOOK



ACADEMY

WILDCATS

2023-24

THE ACADEMY'S MISSION AND VISION

The Academy's mission is to help all students grow into college-ready, exemplary citizens by combining academic mastery with personal empowerment to drive lifelong success. We serve our full community by intentionally developing a school culture that embraces diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Fueling lifelong success through preparation, exploration, and empowerment.

THE ACADEMY'S MIDDLE SCHOOL BELIEVES...

That the middle school experience must be specifically designed to support the unique needs of middle school students. Much of the design of The Academy's Middle School is adapted from the Association of Middle Level Education's work titled, *The Successful Middle School: This We Believe*. The Academy's six core values provide the foundation for our community to engage with one another and to do our best work. A commitment to these values ensures that each member of our community has access to a safe, inclusive, and productive environment in which we can all thrive.

INTEGRITY

I will be honest with my words and open to the ideas of others.
I will follow school rules, even when no one is watching.
I will take ownership over the choices I make and accept the outcomes.

RESPECT

I will respect myself, others, and the environment we share.
I will treat others as they wish to be treated.
I will acknowledge and value the identity and contributions of others.

RESPONSIBILITY

I will be engaged and take the lead in my education.
I will be reliable, punctual, and prepared.
I will follow through and be dependable.

COURAGE

I will stand up for others.
I will ask for help.
I will make the right choice, even when it isn't easy.

KINDNESS

I will care for and be compassionate to others.
I will be inclusive.
I will be helpful and generous.

SELF-CONTROL

I will lead by example.
I will set and achieve my goals.
I will show restraint even when challenged.

VALUES AND PHILOSOPHY

Our middle grades academic program prepares students for post-secondary success while demonstrating growth and achievement on individual measures. Our curriculum provides opportunities to explore important topics of personal, social, and moral significance. We invite young adolescents to pose and answer questions. We challenge students to address real-world, complex issues that introduce multiple, diverse perspectives. Our electives program provides students with opportunities to pursue what they love while trying something new. Teachers rely on active, purposeful instructional strategies that emphasize students to work with one another and movement within the classroom. We believe that middle school is a time for students to learn about themselves and how they fit into the world around them. Outdoor education and service learning empower students to define their sense of self and to figure out how they can meaningfully contribute to the larger community.

Our academic program has three navigational stars which guide our approach to all aspects of the middle grades experience: prepare, explore, and empower.

PREPARE

The Academy's Vision...

All students develop the academic skills needed to prepare for lifelong success.

At the middle school level...

Middle school students will develop the inter- and intra-personal skills to successfully navigate adolescence while demonstrating growth on individual measures.

EXPLORE

The Academy's Vision...

All students explore their strengths and passions through real-world learning.

At the middle school level...

Middle school students will explore their interests and strengths through projects, choice, and reflection.

EMPOWER

The Academy's vision...

All students practice habits of mind that will empower them to lead their own futures.

At the middle school level...

Middle school students will articulate what drives them, their values and goals, and how they meaningfully contribute to the larger community.

CURRICULUM

We rely on a guaranteed, viable curriculum and research-based instructional strategies to ensure that each student is challenged with appropriate level of understanding and readiness. Here are the curriculums we use for our core subject areas: Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies:

Language Arts	HMH Into Literature HMH Writable	https://www.hmhco.com/programs/into-literature#overview https://www.hmhco.com/programs/writable#overview
Math	EnVision	https://www.savvas.com/index.cfm?locator=PS3c5r
Science	HMH Into Science	https://www.hmhco.com/programs/hmh-into-science-6-8#overview
Social Studies	HMH Social Studies	https://www.hmhco.com/programs/hmh-social-studies#overview

ATTENDANCE

We want your students here. Consistent attendance provides each student the best opportunity to learn and grow within our community. If a pattern develops of a student being absent, we will work with the student and family to create a plan for improved attendance. In that plan, we will also work with the student and family to complete missing assignments and/or instruction that was missed.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

The doors to the North Gym (Middle School) will be open at 7:45 to align with the opening of both High School and Elementary. The start of our instructional day is 8:20 a.m. This start time is intentionally staggered to reduce the flow of traffic. We will dismiss each day* at 3:30 p.m. We encourage middle school families to pick up on the west side of the building in both blue and green zones.

**Any changes to the dismissal time will be communicated with students and families*

LATE ARRIVALS TO SCHOOL OR CLASS (TARDIES)

We encourage all of our students to arrive at school and be to classes on time. Being on time provides us with the best opportunity to ensure the student has access to the full experience of the day and/or instruction.

If a student arrives at school after 8:20, they should enter through the Bistro doors (east side of the school) and check-in at the desk. They will receive a tardy pass to give to their classroom teacher in order to enter the learning environment.

The expectation for students is that they are in their seats, ready to begin instruction when the bell rings. The middle school team will conduct "sweeps" of hallways, common areas, and restrooms during passing periods and at the beginning of each period. Tardies are mainly managed by the classroom teacher; however, the middle school admin team may be involved if a pattern of tardiness develops. Patterns of tardiness may result in the use of our school's behavior and conduct guidelines.

GRADING

The primary purpose of grading is to communicate student achievement and progress. Students are assigned a final grade in each course at the end of each semester. At any time, you are encouraged to check your student's progress through PowerSchool. Teachers will do their best to ensure gradebooks are updated each week. If you have any questions regarding your student's grade in a class, please contact that teacher directly.

Our grading scale is:

A	=	90-100	Excellent
B	=	80-89	Good
C	=	70-79	Average
D	=	60-69	Below Average
F	=	59 or Less	Failing
I	=		Incomplete

Each semester, students will have an opportunity to earn the following academic awards:

Students with a GPA of 3.0-3.49 receive academic recognition

Students with a GPA of 3.5-3.99 receive honor roll recognition

Students with a GPA of 4.0 receive high honor roll recognition

Throughout the semester, teachers will assign grades based upon the following:

- Gradebooks are weighted 70% for assessments/projects and 30% for classroom assignments/homework
- Individual grades can be based on participation, completion, and/or accuracy
- Assessments factor into a student's grade and take place after learning has occurred.
- Teachers will notify parents/families when a grade of D or F is assigned. We also aim to communicate any significant changes in a student's behavior, performance, or attitude.

LATE OR MISSING ASSIGNMENTS

Late or missing assignments will be marked as "incomplete" until the work is completed. Student scan turn in a late/missing assignment according to the following:

- Within 2 weeks of the assigned date, late/missing work can earn up to 90% of the total points available for that assignment.
- After 2 weeks, late/missing assignments will not be accepted unless previously approved by the teacher.

REDOING ASSIGNMENTS

All assignment redos must first be agreed upon by the teacher. Once approved, classroom work, assignments, and homework may be redone within 2 weeks for full credit. After 2 weeks, students are no longer able to submit redos, unless previously approved by the teacher.

REDOING ASSESSMENTS &/OR TEST CORRECTIONS

All assessment redos or test corrections must first be communicated to and agreed upon by the teacher. Once approved, assessment/test corrections may be redone within 2 weeks for up to 90%. After 2 weeks, students may redo assessments/submit test corrections for up to 70%.

HOMEWORK

Much of our academic program relies upon classroom instruction. Homework supports students when practicing skills learned in the classroom, previewing new content for an upcoming lesson, completing pieces for projects, and/or preparing for assessments. Completing homework on time is very important because it serves to support classroom instruction. Homework not submitted in a timely manner will be marked as "Incomplete" in PowerSchool and be subject to the "LATE OR MISSING ASSIGNMENTS" practices defined above. Homework may be graded for completion and/or accuracy.

If a student develops a pattern of turning in homework late, we will support the student to complete this work. This may include the student being asked to work before or after school, in place of recess, or during another designated time.

MISSED ASSIGNMENTS AND MAKE-UP WORK DUE TO ABSENCES

When a student misses class due to an absence, they are given two (2) school days for each day absent in which to make up work. Students must make arrangements with their teachers to make up assignments and assessments. After 2 days, any work or assessments not completed are considered late/missing.

If a student's individual circumstances require them to miss extended periods of time, then we will work with the student and family to create a plan of support that accounts for instruction and work completion. Through this collaboration, modifications may be made to eliminate nonessential assignments and/or change deadlines/due dates.

STUDENT-LED CONFERENCES

Student-led conferences are scheduled twice each year (see school calendar). Student-led conferences provide students the opportunity to communicate the content they are learning, to identify their areas of strength, and identify opportunities for growth. Students use their leadership portfolio to illustrate evidence of what they are accomplishing and celebrating. Conferences will include the student, family, and Pride teacher. Pride Time teachers will be available for any questions or concerns; however, they may not be able to address specifics for another teacher.

Student-led conferences are designed for students to share their achievement, growth, and celebrations. If a parent/family wishes to have an additional parent-teacher conference with their student's teachers and/or counselor, please contact the teacher/counselor directly.

ASSESSMENTS

Classroom teachers use a variety of assessments to evaluate student performance. As a middle school, we also use assessments to measure student growth and achievement. The data we collect from these assessments is then used to determine areas of strength and opportunities for growth as a middle school program. We also use this data to best support individual students, including scheduling and/or class placement. Here are two of assessments we use:

NWEA MAP Growth Assessment

Students complete the NWEA MAP Growth Assessment three times each school year in math, reading, and science. These assessments measure a students' achievement and growth compared to millions of students across the country of their same age and content area. The MAP assessments provide us with a score that we use to determine a student's grade-level readiness and to evaluate a student's growth throughout the year. Following each testing period, we will provide students/families with a report illustrating how your student is performing academically.

CMAS (Colorado Measure of Academic Success)

Once a year, students will be asked to complete the state's CMAS assessments in Language Arts and Math. 8th grade students will also complete the state's CMAS assessment for science. The CMAS tests are designed to measure what students have learned in comparison to the state's academic standards. These scores are also used to determine the school's performance and accountability to the larger community.

Other assessments may be used to help us individualize the support for each student. These assessments can include the WIDA Access assessment, progress monitoring for student support, and assessments that aid in the identification of special education services.

MATH PATHWAYS

There are two pathways available for middle school students in math. Placement into the advanced math pathway is determined by:

- Performance on standardized measures (STAR, MAPS, and/or CMAS)
- Demonstration of content mastery by earning an 80% or higher on end of unit assessments

Each year, student performance will be evaluated to determine the best placement for math.

For complete details on the Middle School's math pathways, click [here](#).

BLENDED HONORS

All middle school students have the opportunity to earn an honors designation on their transcript in English, Science, and Social Studies. Any student that is aiming for an honors designation will need to communicate that through the survey at the beginning of each semester. An honors designation can be earned by collaborating with the content-specific teacher and successfully completing the requirements in each content area. For complete details, click [here](#).

COURSE SELECTION AND SCHEDULE REQUESTS

During Spring Semester, our Middle School Counselor and Assistant Principal will present course offerings to all incoming middle school students. Students and parents will complete the Course Selection form and return it to the school. We will create a student schedule for the following school year that will include any of the top six selections. During the first ten school days of each semester, a student may request a change to their schedule through the Middle School Counselor. Depending on availability, schedule change requests might not be fulfilled.

PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

In response to a community survey, we have refined our practices around personal electronics with the following goals:

1. Limit the time students have permitted access to their personal electronics
2. Holding individual students accountable for misusing personal electronics
3. Providing students/families a tool for communication

We now ask that personal electronic devices are not heard or seen inside instructional spaces, this includes both hallways and cafeteria during lunch. With the exception of headphones being used for instructional purposes and as directed by the teacher, individual electronic devices should be in the "off" or "silent" position at all times in the learning environment. We also ask that these devices be stored out of sight.

Electronic devices may be used at designated times and locations. At the middle school level, these spaces and times include before and after school and during recess. Although permitted to be used, students are responsible for ensuring that devices are not used in a manner that is unsafe, illegal, or disruptive to the school environment. We ask that students do not use their personal electronic devices for the following:

- Capturing video or audio recording without the community member's permission
- Capturing photos without the community member's permission
- Cheating or academic dishonesty

If it is determined that a student's personal electronic device has created a disruption to the school or learning environment, we will work with the student and family to create a plan that minimizes future disruptions which could include restricting access to these devices at school.

Students choosing to bring a personal electronic device shall be personally and solely responsible for the security. The Academy shall not assume responsibility for theft, loss, or damage of any such device and will not be responsible for the investigation of such incidents.

NON-ACADEMIC ITEMS

Non-academic items brought to class will be confiscated **if** those items are a distraction to learning in any way. A few students may have a fidget written into a formal intervention plan and in that case, those items are permitted if they are not a distraction. It is the teacher's discretion to confiscate an item if it becomes distracting to the learning environment. Students are not to have Sharpies on school

grounds. Sharpies should be confiscated and should not be returned to students.

FOOD AND DRINK

Water bottles (containing clear water only) *are permitted in classrooms*. No other food or drink is permitted in classrooms. Water bottles are a privilege and may be confiscated if it becomes a distraction or is misused. Open containers of food, candy, or drink in the classrooms will be confiscated and *not returned*. **Students are not to chew gum in classrooms.**

LOCKERS

Lockers are the property of the school and are available for students to rent for a fee during the school year. We encourage students to rent a locker to store their academic supplies, such as a backpack, books, etc. If a student would like to request a locker, you may complete this [Secondary Locker Request form](#). Students should keep their locker combination secret - they should not give their combination to anyone. Students are **not** to share lockers. If a locker does not work properly, the student should report it to the Middle School Office for assistance.

CHROMEBOOKS

The Academy is a 1:1 technology school and every student receives a chromebook. These devices are an essential educational tool we use to improve and build upon learning that is happening in our classrooms.

If a student consistently fails to bring their chromebook to school or their chromebook is damaged for a week or longer, then the administration and IT will make a plan with the family in order to replace or repair the device.

Students have the following responsibilities with the device:

- Charge the device each night in order to be prepared for the next school day.
- Do not share the device with other students.
- Practice digital citizenship.
- Keep the device clean, including no stickers or writing.
- Keep food and drinks away from the device.

PASSES OUT OF CLASS

We know that students cannot learn if they are not in the classroom. Teachers will use their best discretion when students ask to use the restroom. Students who request to use the restroom on a frequent basis will be referred to the school nurse to determine if a physical condition exists necessitating the student's frequent trips out of the classroom. Students should be in the classroom during the first and last 10 minutes of class and during direct instruction.

If a student is out of a classroom, the student must have a pass. Students must get acknowledgement from their teacher before leaving the classroom with the pass. In addition, teachers will have a sign-out sheet for restroom use. Students will sign out prior to leaving and then back in upon their return. Teachers will bring this sheet to the weekly team meetings. If a student is spending an excessive amount of time outside of the classroom, then parents will be notified and a plan may be created to limit passes.

IDENTIFICATION BADGES (STUDENT ID)

Unlike Elementary, middle school students no longer have to wear a uniform. The Academy's staff relies on students wearing their ID to quickly demonstrate they are a member of the middle school community. Because we share a building with multiple divisions, we ask that students are wearing and/or in possession of their ID each and every day. Being in possession of the ID means that the student can quickly show their ID when asked by a member of the staff (in their pocket and/or attached to their backpack).

SECONDARY DRESS CODE

The Dress Code creates opportunities for individual expression given that students follow some basic universal requirements. It creates an environment where everyone can feel comfortable by disallowing hateful or intolerant dress and removing unnecessary and potentially harmful enforcement. Students will be prepared to enter into the broader world with an understanding and acceptance of different people.

VALUES

- The dress code is implemented consistently, to ensure equal treatment for all students.
- Staff and other students allow for expression while maintaining dress code standards.
- The dress code is clear so that it is enforced consistently between various staff members or students.
- Students are able to wear clothing that they are comfortable with, as long as it meets the basic requirements.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

There are some pieces of clothing that are required for the student body.

- Shirts, bottoms, and shoes that meet these standards are a requirement at all times.
 - Shirts that have fabric in the front going down to at least the top of the belly button, back, and connect under the arms.
 - Buttocks must be fully covered with opaque fabric no shorter than the upper thigh.
 - Shoes of any variety. There may be cases where shoes can be removed for a specific activity, but they must be put back on as soon as the activity is done.
- Private areas of the body must be covered with opaque fabric.
- Undergarments must be covered with exceptions of bra straps and waistbands.
- Facial features including the eyes, nose, mouth, and surrounding area must always be visible and displayed in a way that does not make a student unidentifiable.
- Certain classes and activities may require specific attire.

STUDENTS MAY WEAR

We find it important that some items are specifically allowed. This list is not exhaustive and as long as students comply with the General Guidelines their attire is acceptable.

- Shirts including spaghetti straps, strapless tops, tank tops, halter tops, and muscle shirts that meet the basic requirements.
- Bottoms include holes in jeans and opaque leggings.
- Religious or cultural headwear and accessories are accepted.
- Makeup, tattoos, dyed hair.
- Earrings, nose rings, navel rings, and any other jewelry or piercings.
- Bandanas, bows, or other hair accessories.

STUDENTS CANNOT WEAR

- Clothing featuring hate speech targeting race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, health conditions, or other protected groups.
- Violent images or language.
- Attire containing profanity.
- Items that clearly promote any illegal activity.
- Items that promote the use of drugs or alcohol.
- Attire that is pornographic or contains nudity.
- Hats, hoodies with hoods up, or beanies with exceptions for religious, cultural, or medical reasons.

MIDDLE SCHOOL BEHAVIOR AND CONDUCT GUIDELINES

We believe that all community members have the right to a safe, inclusive, and productive learning environment where we can do our best work. The foundation for our safe, inclusive, and productive learning environment is:

- Clear expectations
- Supportive response
- Achieve resolution

We understand and plan on choices being made that impede our ability to provide everyone a safe, inclusive, and productive learning environment. We believe that each of these choices is unique and provides an opportunity to learn and grow. We believe that our response to these choices should be instructional, supportive, and predictable. We believe resolution is achieved when harm is restored and a safe, inclusive, and productive learning environment is achieved. Research conducted over the past decade clearly illustrates that traditional, punitive responses to behavior have not had the intended result of improved behavior. In fact, the opposite is often true – punitive responses often result in increases in undesired behavior.

THE FOUNDATION FOR OUR RESPONSE TO BEHAVIOR AND CONDUCT

Our values when responding to choices that are not supportive of a safe, inclusive, and productive learning environment are:

1. Clear Expectations: Establish and communicate a clear, consistent set of expectations for behavior and conduct
2. Supportive Response: We seek first to understand in an objective way and honor the developmental phase of middle school students
3. Achieve Resolution
 - a. Identify the choice that did not meet expectations
 - b. Identify how that choice impacted themselves, others, and/or the learning environment
 - c. Identify different choices that meet achieve a safe, inclusive, and productive learning environment
 - d. Restore any harm that was caused to self, others, or the learning environment

CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

As a Middle School, we commit to clearly stating expectations, teaching how to meet those expectations, and revisiting/reteaching expectations when necessary.

SUPPORTIVE RESPONSE

Our goal is to support students when a behavior or conduct issue arises in a manner defined by the following:

1. Done in a setting that does not put the interaction on display of other students
2. Asking questions and seeking to understand what happened
3. Using objective language
4. Remaining emotionally constant and/or neutral
5. Treating each response as a first response

ACHIEVING RESOLUTION

When behavior/conduction situations arise, we aim to achieve resolutions and restore a safe, inclusive, and productive learning environment. Resolution is achieved when student can:

1. Identify the choice that did not uphold The Academy’s core values
2. Identify and alternate choice for the future
3. Restore any harm caused by the choice
4. Fulfill any consequences assigned for their choice

BEHAVIOR CATEGORIES

We aim to keep our response proportionate to the behavior/conduct choice made. We rely on the following table to achieve a proportionate, consistent, and predictable response:

Category 1 Behaviors	Category 2 Behaviors	Category 3 Behaviors
<p>These behaviors create an apparent and immediate unsafe learning environment. Law enforcement may be contacted to support the response. Suspensions are usually assigned while an investigation can be conducted and/or a safe environment can be established. Category 1 behaviors follow a three strike system and can result in expulsion the first time.</p>	<p>These behaviors disrupt the environment to a level that additional support is necessary. Category 2 behaviors may result in a temporary removal from the learning environment, a behavioral log entry, conferencing with a Middle School administrator, communication with parent/guardian, and restorative agreements. In addition, suspension and/or expulsion could result.</p>	<p>These behaviors can be redirected in the context of a safe, inclusive, and productive learning environment. Category 3 behaviors may result in a conversation with the responding staff member, communication with the parent/guardian, and/or logical consequences (detention, reflections, apology letter).</p>

INCREASING OUR SUPPORT AND RESPONSE

For each behavior and/or conduct choice made by an individual student, we will increase the level of our support and response. Support that we provide for students can include reflective activities, team-based conferencing, and the use of the MTSS system to create an individualized plan. Responses go from minor consequences (phone call home and/or lunch detention) to major (in school suspension and parents/families shadowing their student). Our goal is to teach students, collaborate with families, and replace punitive responses with restorative/collaborative solutions. Because we believe that each behavior response scenario is unique, variations in our response/support may vary.

TEASING, HARASSMENT, AND BULLYING

In our effort to provide each member of the community a safe, productive, and inclusive environment, we will work hard to address reports of teasing, harassment, and bullying. All three of these behaviors have the potential to make members in our community feel less safe, fearful, and/or unable to engage. We will rely on the following definitions to categorize the behavior and help guide our response. It is important to understand that our response will be somewhat subjective based upon the offender's communicated intent versus the victim's communicated experience.

TEASING

Teasing is making fun of others with the intention of being funny **and** perceived by the victim as a joke and/or causes little to no impact to the victim.

HARASSMENT

Harassment is when the behavior or conduct is intended to harm or intimidate **and** perceived by the victim to cause substantial harm or intimidation. To be considered harassment, the following must also be considered:

- Was the action targeted at a particular person or group of people
- Was the action similar to a previous action and/or a pattern of actions
- Was the action associated with an actual or perceived characteristic such as race or ethnicity, ancestry, color, ethnic group identification, gender expression, gender identity, gender, disability, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, age, or a person's association with a person or group.

BULLYING

Bullying is behavior or conduct that is harmful, unwanted and/or aggressive **and** behavior that is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated over time **and** is behavior that creates a real or perceived imbalance in power.

In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

- An Imbalance of Power: A bully uses their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- Repetition: Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once. This can include both a pattern of experiences to one member of the community. Repetition can also be determined if the bully is choosing similar behaviors with multiple members in the community.

CONSEQUENCES FOR BULLYING

We believe that bullying is detrimental to the learning environment, therefore, we respond to bullying behaviors using a three strike system:

- Bullying 1 = 1 to 3 day ISS or OSS, bullying prevention and intervention support with Middle School counselors, and a remedial discipline plan
- Bullying 2 = 5 day OSS & Revise remedial discipline plan
- Bullying 3 = Recommend for expulsion

Safe2Tell

Safe2Tell provides students in all Colorado schools with an increased ability and opportunity to prevent and report violence and other inappropriate activities by making anonymous calls to 1-877-542-SAFE (7233). The proactive and anonymous features of the program and hotline are critical. Safe2Tell provides the means for children and youth to take a stand, without fear of retribution, and empowers them to make a difference! To anonymously report a school safety concern, [click here](#) to be redirected to the Safe2Tell website. If you have a smartphone, the Safe2Tell app is available for free for Android and iOS.

THREAT MANAGEMENT

Middle school administrators follow CDE's recommendations for managing all real, perceived, and/or potential threats within the middle school community. We utilize our threat management process for addressing any threat within our community. This process always includes a threat screening process and can include a full threat assessment and/or self-harm assessment. We rely on a team approach for this process. That team may include: Principal or Assistant Principal, Counselor, School Resource Officer, Teacher, and/or Staff Members.