



SHADY SIDE ACADEMY

Middle School Student-Parent Handbook

2024–2025 School Year

Last Updated: July 28, 2024

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Dear Middle School Parents and Students,

Welcome to the 2024-25 school year at Shady Side Academy Middle School! We are looking forward to a great year full of exploring, learning, and making new friends together.

This Handbook can serve as a guide for you throughout the school year. The entire Academy operates under our Five Guiding Principles, which are Honesty, Respect, Responsibility, Kindness, and Safety. These five principles guide all of our daily work and interactions with each other, and it is within that framework that we operate. You will definitely see them all in action each and every day!

All of the specific procedures for daily operations are contained within this Handbook. Please review the Handbook together as a family before the first day of school. The shared understanding of this document is one of the many ways we partner with you for an excellent education and vibrant community.

Please, if you have any questions or concerns about anything here, do not hesitate to call me, the front office, your child's teacher or advisor—any of us—because we are here for you and Shady Side.

We are excited to begin this new school year full of growth, learning, and new ideas. Along with the faculty and staff I welcome you to the Middle School and wish you a wonderful year full of days in which we Think Expansively, Act Ethically, and Lead Responsibly.

In partnership,

Michelle Merson
Head of School



Mission

Shady Side Academy (SSA)'s mission is to challenge students to think expansively, act ethically, and lead responsibly.

Philosophy

SSA is a vibrant learning community that values intellectual curiosity, personal integrity, and diverse perspectives. Through a rigorous and balanced curriculum of academics, arts, and athletics, our students are challenged to explore their passions and excel beyond expectations. Supported by active alumni and parents, our unique culture of faculty-student mentorship inspires students to become lifelong learners and engaged, thoughtful citizens of their communities.

Guiding Principles

Shady Side Academy students are expected to abide by the Academy's Guiding Principles of Honesty, Respect, Responsibility, Safety, and Kindness while enrolled in the Academy. These guiding principles serve as the touchstone for all adults and students working together in our community. These principles guide our activities and interactions, helping us to measure not only what we attempt but also the spirit in which we do so.

While these principles guide our daily interactions, they point to the larger, more encompassing ideals and behaviors of integrity, thoughtfulness, and compassion. Each guiding principle is linked to another. For example, we cannot be respectful individuals if we are not honest with ourselves and others.

If we do not act responsibly, we are not being respectful of adults, peers, and ourselves. If we make unsafe choices, we are being neither responsible for nor respectful of ourselves or others. If we act unkindly, we are acting neither respectfully nor responsibly.

Parents play a key role in helping students to uphold our standards. In partnership with the Academy, and in accordance with the SSA Family and School Partnership, parents and the Academy work together to support and endorse the philosophy, mission, and guiding principles of our school.

Honesty

Honesty is the essential guiding principle. Honesty is the act of representing and articulating thoughts, feelings and actions to self and others in an accurate and timely manner. An open, honest environment is essential to our personal well-being as well as the community's well-being.

Personal integrity is based on our honesty and is demonstrated by truthful words and by ethical behavior. Truthfulness in every situation is what we expect of our students at SSA, because acting honestly is respectful and responsible.

We acknowledge the difference between being honest when confronted and volunteering to be fully truthful knowing that consequences are likely. We acknowledge the higher degree of integrity and personal responsibility in being fully truthful before being confronted by an adult.

Respect and Responsibility

The Academy recognizes and safeguards the importance of each of us in the life of the school. Respect and responsibility are closely linked.



Respect is the attitude and behavior of valuing oneself as well as other people, their roles in the community, and the property of the community by acknowledging their inherent value and treating them accordingly. We each have the right to be respected by others, a right that carries with it the responsibility for each of us to respect the students, faculty, staff, and the property of others, the school facilities, and the Academy itself.

When a teacher makes a request of a student in the tone of voice with which they would like to be addressed, this is respect. When students assume responsibility of maintaining their lounge areas instead of looking at that maintenance as “someone else’s job,” they respect the roles of various members of the community as well as community property. In keeping with the Academy philosophy and our commitment to each other as members of the Shady Side community, learning begins with respect for others and respect for others begins with respect for oneself.

Responsibility is the ongoing understanding and acceptance that our beliefs, attitudes, decisions and actions have implications and outcomes both positive and negative and that we are accountable for our decisions and actions. Responsibility demands that we be mindful of the choices we make, the reasons behind those choices, and the willingness to be truthful about our individual and collective roles in the events that grow out of our choices.

We therefore strive to be kind and truthful, to respect rights and property, and to provide each member of the community with the physical, emotional and intellectual safety necessary for growth in a supportive environment. We accept that our decisions both on and off campus can enhance or discredit the reputation of both the individual and the Shady Side community.

Safety

Acting safely is to speak and act in such a manner that allows self, others and property to be free from the risk of harm. Security of people and property is essential to living and working together in a community. The responsibility of maintaining a safe environment lies with students and adults alike, no matter what their role in the Shady Side community.

We must come to the aid of those in need, quickly react in a responsible manner to any situation that may threaten our safety or the safety of others, confront those who are in the process of making decisions that will put their safety or that of others at risk, and inform the appropriate person when an unsafe situation exists or is developing.

Our school should be a place where each of us feels both physically and emotionally safe. We, therefore, have a responsibility to help promote and maintain an environment which is free from all forms of violence.

Kindness

Kindness is thinking, speaking and acting with consideration for oneself and others. We hold ourselves to kindness in thought when we first imagine what a situation seems like from another’s point of view. In seeing through their eyes, empathy and helpfulness become our primary concerns.

We guide ourselves to speak kindly when we consider the sensitivity of others to the power of the language we choose before we put our thoughts into words. We act with a kind heart when we seek to help others and are careful to avoid harming others while pursuing our own goals.

Kindness requires that we continually strive to shape our thoughts, words and actions with sincerity, gentleness and benevolence. Community members are expected to treat each other with kindness. Shady Side Academy is a community in which all members have the right to feel both safe and respect.

We ask both adults and children in the building to be guided by these Guiding Principles daily and to use them in their decision-making processes. Along with the Guiding Principles we also have a Middle School Code of Ethics, which is posted in every classroom.



Shady Side Academy Middle School cultivates a love of learning in its students while promoting and supporting the formation of good character. Development is fostered through the advisory program in the context of a rigorous academic experience and a rich diversity of athletic, artistic, and extra-curricular opportunities.

Middle School Code of Ethics

This Code of Ethics of the Shady Side Academy Middle School sets forth the principles by which each student, teacher, and staff member lives and works within a healthy, ethical community. Our purpose in establishing this code is not to supplant the responsibility of family and home to provide the primary source and means of ethical growth, but to provide some guidelines for living and working together in an atmosphere of honesty, integrity, respect, and mutual trust during any and all school activities. It further distinguishes the rights and responsibilities of all members of the community in pursuit of these goals.

1. I shall strive to be the best that I can be in all that I do.
 2. I shall respect the work and efforts of others and provide encouragement, praise, help, or constructive criticism when it is appropriate.
 3. I shall respect the different religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, customs, and beliefs of others.
 4. I shall strive to be honest in everything that I say or do.
 5. I shall strive to be fair and just in all my dealings with others.
 6. I shall respect the rights of every member of the community by not abusing anyone either by word or by deed.
 7. I shall use the physical and natural resources of the school appropriately and conservatively.
 8. I shall strive to meet my responsibilities and to be accountable for my actions.
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Declaration For a Diverse and Inclusive Community

As an Academy, we must cultivate, understand, and embrace the differences among us as part of our educational endeavor. Academy leadership, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, and students provide an example by fostering an environment of understanding and respect of all people.

Further, we must instruct and empower our children to challenge assumptions and ask questions in order to become responsible citizens in a diverse world. We believe that the recognition and appreciation of differences in race, socio-cultural status, religious tradition, age, gender, ability, and sexual orientation enhance the individual's sense of identity, broaden respect for others, and inspire strong character.

As we strive for academic excellence, so shall we strive for richness and depth in the community life at SSA. Through curriculum and informal school experiences, students at SSA must appreciate and respect the inherent value of all people.

Family and School Partnership

Educating children is a team effort. As educators, we at SSA strive to provide the support, guidance, and instruction for children to both develop as people and, of course, as learners.

Beyond the faculty, coaches, and administrators at SSA, the parents of our students are a crucial part of the equation. When students aren't in school, it is parents who are providing encouragement and guidance to their children. Parents help ensure that their children are making choices outside of school that would help them to be successful in school.



We all have the same essential goal: That each SSA student will attain the knowledge, skills, character traits, and habits of mind required not just for the next step in their educational journey but so that they may live lives that are healthy, fulfilling, and productive. Since we have a common goal, it is essential that SSA personnel and families work in partnership to help students achieve that goal.

At the heart of any good partnership are a few foundational concepts. Here are some for the SSA/parent partnership:

- We all must start with one assumption: That school personnel and parents of students are making decisions that are well intentioned. We may sometimes disagree about a particular issue or course of action. Let's not lose sight of the fact that we all have the same goal. Let's try to understand and respect where each other is coming from.
- Like it or not, we all sometimes make mistakes. This is true of both educators and of parents. Educating children and raising children are two of the hardest challenges in life. No matter how "expert" we might feel about what we are doing, to be a perfect teacher or a perfect parent is likely not an attainable goal. There is nothing more humbling than being an educator or a parent.
- Good communication is essential to a good partnership. In addition to standard, scheduled communications (grade reports, interims, etc.), communication between school personnel and parents often entails e-mails, phone calls, and in-person conversations. If school personnel have a concern about a student—academic or behavioral—they should convey these concerns to parents in a timely fashion. The same is true of parents.

What we ask is that the following, normal chain-of-command is followed:

1. Individual teacher, advisor, or coach as needed in ongoing conversations
 2. Department Chair (where appropriate)
 3. Division Head
 4. Academy President
- It is imperative that all communication between SSA personnel and parents/guardians remains courteous and respectful.
 - Whenever there is an issue or problem with a student, we all need to do our best to ascertain what is really going on. A student's version of events might be different from a teacher's or coach's version of events. While we are all trying to be supportive of our students, we would encourage a healthy skepticism until all information is gathered. Some students may try to pit their parents against particular school personnel, and that isn't a healthy or productive situation for anyone.

We do our best to instill the Academy's core values of honesty, kindness, respect, responsibility, and safety with our students. These values must also characterize the relationship between Academy personnel and our parents. When we adhere to these values, we not only practice what we preach to our students; we also provide the best possible foundation for the school/parent partnership.

Statement of Non-Discrimination

Shady Side Academy, as an educational institution and as an employer, does not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, genetic information, marital status, familial status, sex, age, sexual orientation, veteran status or gender identity and expression in its programs and activities.

The Academy does not tolerate discrimination, harassment or retaliation on these bases and takes steps to ensure that students, employees, and third parties are not subject to a hostile environment in Academy programs or activities.



The Academy responds promptly and equitably to allegations of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. It promptly conducts investigations and takes appropriate action, including disciplinary action, against individuals found to have violated its policies, as well as provides appropriate remedies to complainants and the campus community.

The Academy is committed to taking prompt action to end a hostile environment if one has been created, prevent its recurrence, and remedy the effects of any hostile environment on affected members of the campus community.

For further information on the Academy's Nondiscrimination Policy or to report suspected discrimination, please contact the dean of student life, the chief inclusion, equity and community relations officer, any school counselor, school nurse, or head of school.

Communication

Communication between Shady Side Academy, its faculty, administration, and staff with our families is of the utmost importance to us. We regard it as foundational in building trust and community, thus supporting all of the children who attend our school. There are many reasons for, and methods of, communication. We intend to be the best communicators with you as possible, and we rely on families to do the same with us.

There are several regular e-communications that you will receive from the Academy and the Middle School including:

- **Middle School Bulldog Bulletin Newsletters**
 - Cadence: 1x/week on Thursday mornings throughout the school year
 - The Bulldog Bulletin is where you will find all of the logistical, nitty gritty information to keep your family informed about the week ahead at the Middle School. It will include upcoming events, reminders, and Parents' Association information.
- **Middle School on the Move Newsletters**
 - Cadence: 1x/month on the third Wednesday throughout the school year
 - The Middle School On the Move newsletter will feature a message from School Head Michelle Merson as well as stories from the month prior that showcase real-world learning, achievements, and events happening at the Middle School.
- **Across the Academy Newsletters**
 - Cadence: 1x/month on the first Wednesday throughout the school year
 - The Across the Academy newsletter will feature a message from Academy President Bart Griffith and a selection of the best news stories from across SSA, giving parents a firsthand look at what exciting and expansive learning looks like each month.
- **Middle School Parents' Association Newsletter**
 - Cadence: 1x/month on the fourth Wednesday
 - The Middle School Parents' Association newsletters highlight upcoming Parents' Association events and volunteer opportunities for the following month that parents should be aware of for planning purposes and to get involved with SSA.

You can also expect to receive regular digital communications around the beginning of school each year and for report cards and interims concerning the progress of your child. You may also receive a number of one-time e-mail communications as necessary, but the Academy tries to avoid these as much as possible and include information in the newsletters instead.

You may also receive communications from your child's teacher or advisor concerning progress on a particular assignment, or a personal or disciplinary concern.

Our goal is not to inundate you with emails, but to keep you informed in a timely and helpful fashion.



From parents, we ask you to let us know about absences (by emailing the front office at msfrontdesk@shadysideacademy.org or 412-968-3100, as well as your child's advisor) and any issues that you may have. If you have questions about something in one of your child's academic subjects, please go directly to that teacher via email. They will be best equipped to answer your questions or clarify something that may be unclear. If the concern is more general and not specific to a particular class, please contact the child's advisor. Two other resources whom you may want to consult could be the school counselor or our learning specialist. All of these people are ready and willing to partner with you and your child throughout the school year.

If we don't know, we can't help. Clearly, there are small issues that children need to work through on their own, but for larger, more important things, please do be sure to let us know. If a child is struggling with an academic class, or a social situation, and does so for an extended period of time, it is important to inform an adult here at school, so that we can put together a plan to help. At the very least, we can keep an eye open and be in communication with you as parents.

Our primary goal is to help your children succeed in as many ways possible here at the Middle School. Our best hope of that is to be in communication with you, and for all of us to have as few surprises as possible. We look forward to partnering with you this year!

Communicating with Students During the School Day

Occasionally it is necessary for parents to call the school office and leave a message for a student at school. Similarly, students occasionally need to call home to notify parents of illness, changes in the athletic schedule, or other urgent matters. Aside from the kinds of situations mentioned above, however, it is simply not feasible for students to use the office telephones to set up social events or to ask parents to run errands for them. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

Cell phone and smart watch use during the school day, from 7:40 a.m. to 3:45 p.m., is not permitted. Cell phones and smart watches are to remain turned off and in advisory rooms at all times. Calling or texting is prohibited. Parents are asked to help us to enforce this rule by not calling or texting their children during the day. Necessary messages can be left via the front office at msfrontdesk@shadysideacademy.org or 412-968-3100.

Weather and Emergency Notifications

Shady Side Academy makes every effort to announce a weather-related delay or closing by 6 a.m. This decision is made by the president of the Academy, taking into account other area school districts' decisions as well as local road conditions. The Junior, Country Day, Middle, and Senior Schools will follow an identical procedure on a given day.

In the event of a weather-related delay or closing, families will be notified by Finals site text message alerts and email. Closure and delay notices are also sent to local TV stations (KDKA, WTAE, and WPXI) and posted on:

- The SSA website
- SSA's Instagram account and Facebook page
- Weather hotline (412-447-2202)
- Switchboard voicemail (412-968-3000)

No announcement will be made if the Academy is opening on a normal schedule. If you do not receive an email or text message alert and the weather appears to be bad, please check one of the other sources as a backup before leaving home. **Please do not call the Middle School.**

For students who travel by public school district transportation, SSA has a liberal attendance/arrival policy when its schedule conflicts with that of your school district. For example, if your district is closed (no buses) and



SSA is open, we would encourage attendance but not penalize a student who arrives late or is unable to attend due to lack of transportation or hazardous road conditions.

If your child rides a bus, please stay informed of the closures of your home district as bussing is run by the district and not Shady Side Academy. We recognize our students come from all over the region, and weather conditions may vary widely. Always take a “safety first” approach when deciding whether to attempt to get your child to school. Please be sure to notify the school office if your child will be late or unable to attend due to weather.

Religious Holidays and Cultural Observances

Every member of the Shady Side Academy community should be free to observe religious and cultural holidays without concern that doing so will compromise his or her standing in our community, classrooms, or extracurricular venues. All students and faculty are entitled to reasonable excused absences for these observances. The School Heads and faculty will make appropriate arrangements for those students who must miss school because of a religious holiday. The following are prime examples of the considerations and accommodations that families can expect for a religious observance:

- No tests or major assessments should be scheduled on a major religious holiday or the day immediately following such observances. It shall not be expected that a student will complete major papers, projects, lab reports or lengthy homework assignments for submission the day following a major observance.
- Since students are learning to plan their work in an organized fashion, they are responsible for making up any work that may be interrupted by a religious holiday. However, students—or parents of younger students—may request in advance an individual extension for homework or projects.
- While faculty should not be expected to re-teach lessons that are missed, they can be expected to provide an outline of the upcoming material in advance of an absence for religious observance. Students or parents should request such material several days ahead of the event.
- Consideration shall be given as well to a student’s inability to prepare for tests during major religious observances.
- Students will be excused from athletic and other co- and extracurricular commitments for religious observances.

As is true of nearly all that we—parents and school—do on behalf of children, the success of this philosophical approach depends upon partnership, mutual responsibility, and communication. The school asks that parents at the outset of the school year convey to the Head’s Office the religious and cultural observances that might affect a child’s school experience. During the year, a reminder that a specific observance is approaching also would be appreciated by individual faculty.

Parents are encouraged to approach an individual School Head with their ideas or suggestions related to religious and cultural observances.

General Information

Administrative Phone Numbers

Shady Side Academy Middle School Main Office Phone Number
(Monday – Friday until 4:30pm)
412-968-3100

After Hours Security
412-352-7657

Shady Side Academy Middle School Offices

Ms. Michelle Merson, Head of School
412-968-3116



Mr. Brian Johnston, Assistant Head, Director of Studies
412-968-3154

Mrs. Amy Hurtuk, Dean of Students
412-968-3115

Mr. David Vadnais, Director of Athletics
412-968-3107

Mrs. Kasey Fron, Associate Director of Middle School Admission (Grades 6-12)
412-968-3155

Ms. Georgia Leasher, Counselor
412-968-3159

Mr. Matthew Paterra, Learning Specialist
412-968-3041

Shady Side Academy Middle School Support Staff

Mrs. Becci Carter, Admissions
412-968-3164

Mrs. Kristan Fisher, Administrative Assistant to the Head of School, Receptionist
412-968-3100

Shady Side Academy Middle School Head Form Advisors

Mr. Timothy McGuigan, Grade 6
tmcguigan@shadysideacademy.org

Mrs. Lauren Cannon, Form I
lcannon@shadysideacademy.org

Mrs. Lauren Messner, Form II
lmessner@shadysideacademy.org

E-mail for faculty and staff: First initial, Last name @shadysideacademy.org

Example: mmerson@shadysideacademy.org



Shady Side Academy Middle School Faculty

The most efficient way to reach faculty is via email. If you need to call and leave a message for a faculty member, call Kristan Fisher at 412-968-3100.

Braver, Molly 6th Grade - Social Studies	Marcus, Daniel 6th, 7th, 8th Grade - Chorus
Brunner, Matthew R. 6th Grade - Science	Mason, Kate 6th, 7th Grade - Art
Callaghan, Shan 6th Grade - Chinese	Maxwell, Bonnie K. 7th Grade - Science
Cannon, Lauren 7th grade - English, Form I Head Form	McGuigan, Timothy 6th, 7th, 8th Grade - Tech and Design, Grade 6 Head Form
Donato, Christopher 6th, 7th, 8th Grade - Band	Messner, Lauren 8th Grade - Mathematics, Form II Head Form
Falbo, Sarah 7th, 8th Grade - English	Onest, Pam 6th Grade - English
Famoso, Sylvia 6th, 8th Grade - Spanish, 6th Grade Latin	Pryor, Katharine 8th Grade - Social Studies
Fearn, George 8th Grade - English	Simmons, Jarrod 6th, 7th, 8th Grade - Fitness
Fogle, Ethan 7th Grade - Social Studies	Sutton, Timothy 6th, 7th, 8th Grade - Music
Fong, Mandy 7th, 8th Grade - Chinese	Vadnais, David - 412-968-3107 Director of Athletics
Gorse, Elizabeth P. 6th, 7th, 8th Grade - Fitness & Wellness	Vorrasi, Stefanie 6th, 8th grade - Art
Guering, Mary - 412-968-3193 Librarian	Waked, Paul 8th grade - Physics/Science
Hart, Kelly (Sabbatical replacement) 6th, 7th, 8th Grade - Latin	Warner, Jessica 7th, 8th grade - Spanish
Hull, Nick 7th, 8th Grade - Mathematics and Science	Willesen, Kaitlyn 6th, 7th grade - Social Studies
Hurtuk, Amy - 412-968-3115 Dean of Students/8th Grade - Mathematics	Wood, Kelli L. 7th, 8th grade - Mathematics and Latin
Jenkins, Rhett (Full year sabbatical) 6th, 7th, 8th Grade - Latin	Wright, Rebecca 6th, 7th grade - Mathematics
Lloyd, Pam 6th, 7th, 8th Grade - Wellness	



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Daily Guidelines

Attendance

The Middle School Office is open on school days from 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. **School hours are from 7:40 a.m. until 4 p.m.** Voice mail may be left at any time. Parents should call or email the office at msfrontdesk@shadysideacademy.org or 412-968-3100 to report absences, to leave urgent messages for students, or to schedule conferences. If you get voice mail when you call, we will return your call as soon as possible.

Transportation

Carpools

Students who are brought to school by car should be dropped off at the turn-around so that they can enter Benedum Hall through the cafeteria door before 7:40 a.m., or the front door after 7:40 a.m. **Drivers should not park in the turn-around at any time.** Please discharge passengers only between the white lines painted on the circle. Also, please have students exit cars from the passenger side only for safety reasons. **No car should pull around others that are still discharging passengers. Parents may never park in the circle during arrival or dismissal times.**

All car pick-ups at the Senior School gym must form a single line above the tennis courts on the right side of the road. Cars should remain in line, and students should come to the cars. Parents should remain in their cars and should pull up as far as possible before stopping. Under no circumstances should parents pick up their children in the Hillman parking lot. Drivers should not load cars in the middle of the road, as this blocks traffic. Cars may not drive into or load in the bus zones in front of the gym. Students being picked up at the Middle School after athletics will wait until the buses to the Senior School depart, and then cars that have waited along the side of the road may proceed up the drive. Your cooperation in following these rules will make the afternoon rush resolve itself more smoothly and safely.

Busses

Students, whether traveling to or from the Academy, the Senior School gym, another school for an athletic contest have a special responsibility to behave appropriately on the bus. Each rider has an obligation to ensure that the trip, no matter how short, is a safe one. We urge each student and his or her parents to read, discuss, and support the rules set forth below.

- The bus driver is in charge. The driver's instructions and rules are to be followed at all times.
- Students must follow this district's guidelines on masking.
- Students are to enter and exit the bus in an orderly manner, filling seats from the rear to the front.
- Students must sit in the seats that the driver assigns.
- Students are to remain seated at all times on the bus.
- Students should not leave a mess on the bus.
- These behaviors are prohibited on the bus:
 - Fighting
 - Hitting
 - Pushing
 - Profanity
 - Screaming
 - Throwing objects
 - Leaning out of windows or putting hands/arms out of windows
 - Gesturing at others outside of the bus



Riding the bus is a privilege; it is not an automatic right. Any student who repeatedly disobeys bus rules will lose the privilege of riding the bus for a period of time to be specified by the bus company or the school. The student's parents will be expected to arrange for alternate transportation to and from the Middle School.

No bus rider may leave the bus at any stop other than the usual one. For liability reasons the drivers of busses contracted to all school districts are not allowed to carry any passengers not officially assigned to them. Please keep this in mind when your child is making after school plans with friends. In these cases, it is probably a good idea to consider carpooling.

School District Bussing

State law requires districts within 10 miles of each campus to provide students with the same transportation service they provide for their own students. If a district does not provide transportation for its own students, it will not provide transportation for Shady Side Academy students. For questions regarding transportation, please contact [Linda Porter](#) at 412-968-3022.

Arrival at School

Benedum Hall is not open until 7:20 a.m. Starting at 7:30 a.m., there will be faculty supervision of students in the cafeteria. Students arriving in cars should be dropped off at the Middle School turn-around so that they can enter the building through the cafeteria entrance before 7:40 a.m. After 7:40 a.m. students may enter through the front door. **Please note: Drivers may not park on the turn-around at any time, as this disrupts the traffic pattern.**

Students will be dismissed from the cafeteria at 7:40 a.m. to go to their homerooms for attendance and check-in. **Classes begin at 8 a.m.** The front door will be locked at all times except from 7-8 a.m. At all other times students may use their key fobs, and visitors will need to be buzzed in.

Lateness

Students who arrive after 8 a.m. should sign in at the front desk and will be marked tardy. Students who are tardy five times in a trimester will serve an early morning detention. After ten tardies a student will serve another detention and the Dean of Students will have a conversation with the parents.

If tardiness continues, the family may be required to meet with the school administration in order to resolve the situation. We realize that our students are dependent on others for transportation; please do your part to ensure that your child will arrive at school on time every day. Students are not marked tardy if the assigned school bus is late.

Excuses such as "missed the bus", "slept late", or "the alarm didn't go off" are not considered as legitimate reasons for tardiness. Car-poolers should plan on leaving sufficient time to avoid traffic. If you find you are continually running into traffic, please make every effort to leave early enough to arrive on time.

If a student has an appointment in the morning and comes to school late, he or she is considered tardy. However, if he or she brings in a note of explanation (from parent, doctor appointment, orthodontist appointment, etc.) then it would be considered an excused tardy, depending on the reason. If there is no written legitimate reason for lateness, then it is considered an unexcused tardy.

Reporting Absences

A student's consistent attendance at school is critical to his or her chances at success, just as conversely his or her prolonged absence is likely to hinder both academic and social progress at school. Students who miss more than 25 days in one year may jeopardize their standing in the grade and may need to repeat it the following year. Students who miss more than 25 classes of a particular course may also jeopardize their ability to get credit for that course.



When a student is absent from school his or her parent or guardian should call the office to confirm the absence before 9 a.m. When a child returns to school after an illness or an injury, he or she should bring a note from a parent or guardian stating if he or she may not participate in athletics and for how long he or she is to remain on gym study. Gym study is an academic study hall during the athletic period. A note from a parent is required for assignment to gym study. For a student to be assigned to gym study (more than three days), a note from a physician (unrelated to the student) is necessary.

In the event a child is to be absent from school for a reason other than illness, we ask that parents let the office and advisor know in writing as far in advance as possible, so that we can let the student's advisor and teachers know when he or she will be absent. That way we can help make sure that the student has a clear understanding of what needs to be done during the absence. Tests, assignments, and other work should be completed, if possible, before the absence. Our goal is to have each student's learning continue smoothly, without undue interruption or penalty for late work. Even if you have notified the advisor and teachers of an absence, please be sure that you also inform the office.

If a student knows that he or she will be absent, the student is encouraged to check their Canvas pages for any homework assignments or call another student. In general, students who miss school for only one day will be held responsible upon return for assignments and tests missed on that day.

Upon return to school, the student should bring a written statement from a parent, guardian, or physician stating the exact reason for the absence, and:

- The exact date(s) of the absence from school
- In the case of illness, dates are required. Recurring patterns of illness may require the student to obtain an excuse from an attending (non-related) physician.
- Absences of five (5) or more consecutive days require a medical excuse from a (non-related) physician.

Parents of students whose absences from school are chronic for medical reasons or otherwise may be required to meet with the Head of School and/or the School Counselor to clearly define the pattern and seek solutions.

Transportation From Athletic Contests and Field Trips

There will always be a bus back to Shady Side from any athletic contests or field trips. You will receive notification before such trips specifying both time and place (Middle School or Senior School) for pick-up. Parents may choose to meet their child at the event and go directly home. In this case, the parent should let the coach or a chaperone know that the child is leaving with a parent. Please refer to the information below for information specifying when a written note or email is required in advance.

Circumstances NOT requiring a note from home

1. Your daughter/son is returning home directly from the contest site or from the Senior or Middle School with a family member of yours who is 21 years of age or older.
2. Your daughter/son is returning home only from the Senior or Middle School with a family member of yours, another player's family, or a typical carpool arrangement in which the driver is 21 years of age or older.
3. Your daughter/son is returning home with a brother or sister who is a Shady Side Academy student at the same time as your daughter or son.

Circumstances requiring a note from home

1. Your daughter/son is returning home directly from the contest site with a family member of another teammate or a different adult driver than usual, regardless of the age of the driver.
2. Your child is returning home from the Senior or Middle School with a different adult than usual who is 21 years of age or older.
3. Your child is returning home from the Senior or Middle School with a member of someone else's family, who is less than 21 years of age.
4. Your child is returning home from the Senior or Middle School with a brother or sister who ranges in age from 16 to 20 years of age who is not an enrolled student at Shady Side Academy.



Walking Between Campuses

For the safety of the students, we do not permit walking between the schools. If a Middle School student needs to report back to the Middle School after athletics, then that student should make arrangements with a parent for proper transportation between the Senior and Middle Schools. We provide transportation for certain events (eg. Robotics).

Vacations/Breaks

We feel that Shady Side Academy breaks are of sufficient duration and are published far enough in advance to allow families to plan accordingly. We strive to make every day a productive teaching and learning day. The time around vacations can be especially important, as teachers often schedule tests and major assignments to wrap up the work of preceding weeks or begin new material immediately after break. Absences at these times can interfere with a student's normal progress. Should absence be absolutely unavoidable, we require that you discuss the situation as far in advance as possible with the Head of School.

Any family taking extra vacation time after having consulted with the Head of School must understand that the Middle School faculty cannot be expected to re-teach the missed material. As such, a child's progress may be jeopardized by such a vacation. Catching up on missed material will happen during conference periods, and not during athletics, which are still required.

Homework Collection During an Absence

If a student is absent for one day, he/she may check with a friend for any missed assignments or check the teacher's Canvas page. Most teachers update the website to include at least weekly assignments. Any handouts may be collected when the child returns from the absence. In the case of a long absence, the student should check with his/her advisor to be placed on the Tutorial.

Lunch

Each grade level eats lunch separately in the cafeteria at assigned tables, which change monthly. After an initial period of settling in, the Form II class may be given open seating, within certain parameters.

Both new and returning students are required to have a My Payments Plus (MPP) account to cover any additional food purchases beyond the lunch included in the Inclusive Tuition Plan. MPP accounts should be preloaded with funds to cover these extra food purchases. If there are not sufficient funds in the MPP account, your child will be denied transaction. For instructions on setting up an MPP account, visit www.shadysideacademy.org/lunch-menus.

Gym Study

Gym study is primarily for the ill and/or injured. A student must bring in a note from his or her parents stating that he or she cannot participate in athletics and why (illness, injury, early dismissal). The note must also state the length of time he or she will be on gym study. Three days is the limit for parental notes.

If a student will be on gym study for a longer length of time, due to an injury or illness, the note must be written by a non-related doctor and state the reason and length of time. Students who remain on gym study until cleared by a doctor must bring in a note of release, stating that they may now participate in athletics.

Gym study is also used for a student who has an early dismissal that falls between 2:20-3:30 p.m. These students should go to Gym Study at the Middle School, and not to athletics. Gym study may not be used for convenience as extra study time.

Tutorial



If a student needs academic support that cannot be provided in the classroom or during the conference period, a teacher may refer the student to Tutorial. The reasons for such a referral include making up work missed due to several days' absence; individualized instruction or review in a particular subject area; strengthening organization or test-taking skills, etc. Students typically remain on Tutorial for a very short time, usually a day or two. Tutorial meets during the Athletic/Activities Period, so students who are referred to Tutorial miss their normal athletic, dramatic, or other activity. Thus, we like to minimize the time a student spends in Tutorial.

Referral to Tutorial is at the discretion of a student's teacher or advisor. While a student or a parent may ask that a student be placed on Tutorial, the teacher or the advisor makes the final decision. The Director of Studies and the Head of Middle School also reserve the right to schedule students for Tutorial at their discretion.

Regular Dismissal

The final academic class of the day ends at 2:20 p.m., at which time students should organize any materials they are taking home. At this time students move on to the activities part of the day which extends from 2:20 p.m. through 3:40 p.m. This is also required unless a student has received an exemption.

On regular school days students with athletics at the Senior School will be dismissed from the Senior School gym by approximately 3:45 p.m. Any student with an after-school activity here at the Middle School campus (eg. Studio Art, Drama, 6th grade Soccer, Intramurals) who gets picked up by car, will stay at the Middle School and be picked up here.

On early dismissal days (noted in advance) students who ride buses will be dismissed from the Senior School gym at 12:10 p.m., while car-pooling students will be dismissed from the Middle School. Check with your bus company to see if they honor our early dismissal—not all of them do. If you have multiple children with activities in different spots, the default is to the Senior School. Early dismissals require a note from home, either by email or a physical note.

Early Dismissals/Leaving During The Day

If a student must leave school early on a given day, he or she must bring a note from home or send an email to [MSFrontdesk](#) stating the reason for the early dismissal (doctor's appointment, orthodontist appointment, religious event, etc.), the time leaving, and whether or not he or she will return, and give it to his or her advisor during homeroom period that day.

A parent must come into the office to pick up a child for an early dismissal. If the student is late, the note should be turned in directly to the office when the student checks in. Upon returning from an early dismissal, please remember to sign in on the late sheet. Early dismissals should be reserved for serious matters. Please try to schedule medical appointments, etc. outside of the school day. A child who is to be dismissed between 2:20 p.m.-3:45 p.m. will remain in gym study that day and should be picked up at the Middle School.

We also ask that parents notify the office if someone other than a parent will be picking up a student for an early dismissal from the Middle School.

Parent Notification of the School

In the event that parents find it necessary to leave their children in the care of a relative or sitter, we ask that they notify the office in writing to inform the school who the caretaker will be and what days the parent(s) will be away. This will enable us to contact the appropriate person in case of an emergency or in the event that parental permission is needed for some reason.

Dances

Dances at the Middle School are generally held twice a year for the Form I and Form II (7th and 8th grade) students, with no outside guests permitted. Students attending a Middle School dance must be picked up by an adult. No student may leave the grounds on foot.



Dress Code

The dress code has been developed with input from students, parents, teachers, and administrators and has several purposes. First, it helps students to distinguish between school and leisure time. It also ensures a certain amount of uniformity among the student body while allowing for personal taste. Finally, students' dress should be affordable and convenient, and should not prove a distraction to the business of going to school.

Tops

- Collared shirts, including:
 - Polo shirts
 - Golf shirts
 - Turtlenecks
 - Mock necks
 - Collared sweaters
- Shirts must fully cover the stomach at all times through a full range of motion (when arms are raised, etc.)

Bottoms

- Dress pants, shorts, skorts, or skirts, limited to the following:
 - Khaki
 - Wool
 - Corduroy
 - Linen
 - Colored denim (not blue)
- Short, skort, and skirt length should be closer to knees than hips. Skirts must be worn with leggings, tights, or shorts underneath (skorts excluded).
- Leggings (or yoga pants) may be worn under skirts or dresses, but not on their own.

Warm Layers

Permitted layers, to be worn over a collared shirt:

- SSA regulation sweatshirt
- Sweater or sweatshirt, as long as the logo is smaller than a fist
- Half-zip or full-zip fleece
- Vests

Not permitted:

- Outdoor coats and jackets may not be worn during the school day
- Non-SSA hoodies may only be worn on Dress Down Days

Shoes



<p>Permitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Closed-toe shoes that cover the entire foot ● Sneakers ● Boots ● Heels of fewer than 1.5 inches 	<p>Not Permitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Open-back shoes, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Crocs, clogs, slippers, or slides ○ Back-strap shoes ○ Flip-flops ● Heels higher than 1.5 inches
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General
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clothing may not feature rips or slits ● Clothing must cover all undergarments ● Shoulders, stomachs, lower backs, and bottoms should be covered at all times ● Clothing may not feature images or messages related to politics, alcohol, or drugs ● Hats, non-SSA hoodies, leggings, and blue denim may only be worn on Dress Down Days ● Backless shoes are a safety concern and are not permitted at any time

Dress Up Days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Navy blazer ● White button-down shirt with tie or collared blouse with sleeves ● Tan dress khakis (pants or skirt) ● Dress shoes are optional

Dress Down Days	
<p>Permitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hoodies ● Leggings/yoga pants ● Athletic shorts and pants ● Sweatshirts ● Sweatpants ● Jeans ● Hats 	<p>Not Permitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ripped clothing ● Tank tops ● Sleeveless shirts ● Cropped tops ● Backless shoes, including Crocs, slides, and slippers

Additional Guidelines:

- Girls' skirts must be of modest length. No slits, no wrap-around skirts. Skorts (same length) are acceptable. This applies to regular dress, dress up days, and dress down days. Skirts must be worn with leggings, tights, or shorts underneath.
- Shady Side reserves the right to judge the length of skirts and shorts, the size of pants, and the manner in which clothing is worn.
- Cargo pants (with pockets on the legs) are acceptable, as are cargo shorts or cargo skirts on regular dress days.
- Dress pants and slacks must fit appropriately.
- A sweater (cardigan, v-neck, crew neck) is not required, but students should be advised that parts of the building can be quite cold in winter. We advise that all students keep a sweater at school.
- No facial piercings.
- Dress-down days will be announced periodically throughout the year. Jeans and T-shirts (no tank tops) will be allowed on these days, within the bounds of good taste.



Things Not to Bring to School

Objects which pose a threat to the safety of one's self or others, such as guns, knives, and fireworks, should not be brought to school. Bringing such items to school may cause serious disciplinary action.

The following are examples of other items, which have no place in school: things to sell, toys, dolls, and electronic games. Such items may be confiscated by teachers or advisors.

Students may not sell items to other students on school property. They may not deliver previously sold items at school, either.

Tobacco or other substances, such as e-cigarettes and vaping devices, are prohibited for Middle School students at any and all school-related functions or on Academy grounds at any time.

Chewing gum is not allowed in the school building.

No coffee, energy drinks such as Red Bull, Monster, etc. are permitted at the Middle School during the academic day or during athletics.

If students need to bring in otherwise inappropriate items for a class presentation, they should make arrangements in advance with the teacher of the class.

We realize that some of our students have long bus rides and use mobile devices while traveling to and from school. Phones should not be used in the school building; they should be stored in homerooms, turned off during the day.

On occasion, students have small bake sale and fundraising events, and students are permitted to contribute to these efforts. Students are allowed to bring no more than \$40 to campus on any given day.

Finally, the school cannot assume responsibility for expensive items. Bring them to school at your own risk.

Advisory Program

The Middle School Advisory Program provides support for each child's academic, social, and personal growth. Each student meets with his or her advisor daily during conference period and in Advisory period. Students will also meet with advisors twice a week throughout the year to discuss issues of relevance. There are also many opportunities for students to meet with their advisors on an informal basis. Each grade level has a Head Form Advisor who supports that grade level and its activities and needs.

Parent/Student/Teachers Conferences

Parent conferences are scheduled two times during the school year and take place together with a student's advisor and the student. Conferences can be in-person at school or on Zoom and will be scheduled with families by the advisor.

Grade level teachers are in regular contact with the Head Form Advisors, the Director of Studies, and others to discuss specific ways to help students. We also have a school counselor and a learning specialist working closely with faculty in order to offer additional support to students.

School Counselor

In addition to the nurturing environment that the Advisory Program creates, a licensed clinical psychologist is on staff to provide support for student and student-related family needs. The role of the school psychologist/counselor is to offer consultative services to students, faculty and parents. The counselor maintains an open-door policy whereby students can drop in to discuss academic and/or personal issues within the boundaries of confidentiality.



Dean of Students

The Dean of Students serves as a member of the Middle School administrative team and assists with the daily function of school, specifically in the areas of disciplinary prevention and intervention. The Dean of Students helps to foster a positive, engaging, and caring atmosphere, and a healthy Middle School community by providing programming and leadership opportunities that enable students to flourish. The Dean of Students works closely with the School Counselor, Head Form Advisors, Head of School, Assistant Head of School, and the faculty.

School Health

The school nurse, Ms. Donna Giel, RN, BSN, is available to students, families, and faculty to support health and physical concerns. Discussions and assessments take place with the boundaries of confidentiality. The nurse offers consultative, screening, and referral services to outside medical professionals, and serves as a liaison between the Academy and outside medical professionals when appropriate. Nurse Giel can be reached at dgiel@shadysideacademy.org or 412-968-3189.

Keeping an Ill Child Home

Occasionally parents must make a difficult decision regarding their child's health and ability to attend school.

When should you keep your child home from school? The following are a few suggestions:

- A fever of 100.0 degrees or more - A child should be fever free for 24 hours without the aid of any fever reducing medications before coming to school
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- Stomach ache or fatigue, accompanied by nausea or vomiting
- Acute cold and/or persistent cough- these symptoms can be difficult to manage throughout the school day and be disruptive in class
- Red, irritated eyes with pus-like or excessive watery drainage
- Inability to sleep well the night before due to not feeling well
- An undiagnosed rash

Returning From an Illness

Students who exhibit signs and symptoms of communicable illnesses should not be in school. This includes any student with a temperature of 99.5 degrees or more. Students may return when:

- They are free of fever for 24 hours;
- A non-communicable illness has been diagnosed and certified in writing by a physician;
- The child has recovered or received appropriate treatment and is no longer infectious.

State Immunization Policy

Your child will not be permitted to participate in physical education or athletic activities until the completed health form is in the office. **The State of Pennsylvania now requires that every student in school must have up-to-date immunizations or the State will not permit a child to attend school.**

Academy Medication Policy

A nurse will be on duty in the school building to aid students who become ill. Taking medicine of any kind involves some risk of complications, and for this reason, the Academy has developed strict guidelines for dispensing medication to students on campus. Every effort should be made for students to take their medication at home; but if a child is required to take medicine during school hours, and the parent cannot be at



school to administer it, then it may be given in compliance with the school medication policy. Prescribed medication is to be administered only under the direction of a school nurse. Please review these guidelines carefully. Medication will not be administered except as outlined in this policy.

Medications

All medication will only be administered by the School Nurse (Exception: Inhalers and Epipens may be carried and self-administered by students as long as a completed [Medication Authorization form](#) signed by both the parent and physician is on file in the Nurse's Office).

Prescription medications must be sent in a prescription labeled container and must remain in a locked cabinet in the Nurse's Office and cannot be returned daily. (If necessary, the parent should request a duplicate container from the pharmacy.) A [Medication Authorization form](#) must accompany the medication. This form must include both the parent and physician's signature, written instructions including the child's name, the name of the medication, the dosage, the time it is to be taken, and the termination date.

If you wish your child to take an over-the-counter medication not provided by the school, the medication must be sent from home in the original container, labeled with the student's name, the dosage, and the time it is to be taken. A [Medication Authorization form](#) must accompany the medication. The medication will then be stored in a secured cabinet in the Nurse's Office and administered by the nurse at the appropriate times.

It will be the student's responsibility to come to the Nurse's Office to take any medication.

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to inform the School Nurse of new medication requests by submitting a Medication Authorization form. Unused medication will be returned, upon request, to the parent only. Otherwise, a prescription will be discarded one week after its termination date or at the conclusion of the school year.

Injectable Medication

Injectable medication is given in extreme emergencies only and must be taken in compliance with the previously outlined guidelines for oral medications. Any used syringes or other bio-hazardous materials must be disposed of in school designated biohazard receptacles (located in Nurse's Office and Training Room). If a student is unable to self-administer injectable medication, it will be given by the School Nurse, if the parent so elects. Please be aware that the Nurse may not be available at all times to administer the medication. The parent is welcome to come and administer the medication himself or herself in this circumstance. **One exception is Epipen Medication. If a student is unable to self-administer the Epipen, it may be given by the designated person.**

Concussion Policy

To ensure the safety of every athlete at Shady Side Academy, all student athletes will receive a baseline Impact test to determine baseline brain functioning. If your child sustains a concussion during the school day or during a Shady Side Academy athletic event, parent/guardians will be notified by the nurse or athletic trainer. At that time, the nurse or athletic trainer will refer the student to a physician who will be able to complete a more thorough exam.

Written documentation from a physician is required to implement academic and athletic accommodations. Likewise, to be cleared from concussion accommodations written documentation is required from a physician. No student will be cleared for athletics without this documentation. If your child sustains a concussion outside of Shady Side Academy it is the parent's responsibility to inform the school nurse and to provide documentation from a physician. The school nurse will work in conjunction with athletic trainers, coaches, teachers, advisors, and counselors to ensure accommodations are followed as per physician orders. If you have any questions regarding Concussion protocol please feel free to contact your child's school nurse.



Academics

The curriculum of each course and its collection is considered and deliberate. Families should not expect exceptions or substitutions within the curriculum; all students will be held accountable for that content and for their full participation.

Grading Philosophy

We believe learning is a valuable process, and that middle schoolers are not finished products. All students have the ability to learn, engage, and demonstrate understanding. With clear and positive expectations as well as timely, direct feedback, students will have the means to take ownership of their learning and refine those skills upon which learning depends. Our grades, comments, and various communications contribute to a vital conversation between students, families, and teachers, the purpose of which is to align expectations, practices, and goals for the student. Consequently, grading at the Middle School seeks to both embody Shady Side’s tradition of academic excellence and celebrate the profound growth we hope and expect students to experience in their middle school years.

Course Requirements

- **Grade 6:** English, mathematics, world language, social studies, science, art, athletics, tech and design, health, music, physical education, library, and study skills.
- **Grade 7 (Form I):** English, mathematics, world language (choice of Latin, Chinese or Spanish), social studies, science, art, athletics, health, music, tech and design, library, and physical education.
- **Grade 8 (Form II):** English, mathematics, world language (choice of Latin, Chinese, or Spanish), social studies, science, art, athletic, health, music, tech and design, library, and physical education.

English, mathematics, world language, social studies, and science are considered academic subjects. All academic courses are graded according to the following scale:

- 90-100 – High Honors
- 80-89 – Honors
- 70-79 – Average
- 60-69 – Passing

In addition to numerical grades, we give ratings for effort.

Rating/Descriptor	Characteristics of student performance
5/Exemplary	Student effort is exemplary in the following ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student almost always takes initiative in class discussions and activities. ● Student almost always assists peers in an appropriate fashion. ● Student almost always leads by example in class discussions, activities, and citizenship. ● Student almost always responds positively to challenges and to constructive criticism. ● Student almost always sets high personal standards for academic performance and classroom conduct. ● Student almost always takes intellectual risks. ● Student almost always pursues learning independently outside the classroom and beyond the curriculum.



4/Commendable	<p>Student effort is commendable in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student often takes initiative in class discussions and activities. ● Student often assists peers in an appropriate fashion. ● Student often leads by example in class discussions, activities, and citizenship. ● Student often responds positively to challenges and to constructive criticism. ● Student often sets high personal standards for academic performance and classroom conduct. ● Student often takes intellectual risks. ● Student often pursues learning independently outside the classroom and beyond the curriculum.
3/Expected	<p>Student effort meets expectations in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student comes to class on time. ● Student brings necessary materials to class. ● Student completes homework and projects on time. ● Student is attentive in class. ● Student participates in class activities and discussions. ● Student works cooperatively with teacher and classmates. ● Student observes the rules of the classroom. ● Student uses conference periods for extra help as needed. ● Student demonstrates a positive attitude.
2/Inconsistent	<p>Student effort is inconsistent in one or more of the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student is frequently late to class. ● Student frequently forgets to bring necessary materials to class. ● Student frequently fails to complete homework and projects on time. ● Student is frequently inattentive in class. ● Student avoids participating in class activities and discussions. ● Student does not work cooperatively with teacher and /or classmates. ● Student frequently fails to observe the rules of the classroom. ● Student frequently fails to use conference periods for extra help as needed. ● Student frequently demonstrates a poor attitude.
1/Unacceptable	<p>Student effort is unacceptable in one or more of the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student is habitually late to class. ● Student habitually forgets to bring necessary materials to class. ● Student habitually fails to complete homework and projects on time. ● Student is habitually inattentive in class. ● Student habitually avoids participating in class activities and discussions. ● Student habitually fails to work cooperatively with teacher and/or peers. ● Student habitually fails to observe the rules of the classroom. ● Student habitually fails to use conference periods for extra help as needed. ● Student habitually demonstrates a poor attitude.

Homework

Homework is a very important part of the academic program here at the Middle School. It enables students to work independently on a lesson and to ask informed questions about the material. Students will typically have an assignment in each course that will be due the next time that course meets. Assignments may vary in length, and some may require a student to spread work out over a period of time before submitting a finished product in class.

All students are required to have a planner, which is distributed on the first day of school. Teachers will announce assignments in class, write them on the board, or hand out an assignment sheet; it is the students' responsibility to keep track of these assignments. Online teacher pages for all classes are housed in Canvas, the Academy's Learning Management System (LMS).



To access Canvas, [click here](#) and enter your Veracross portal login credentials. Or, if you are already logged into Veracross, click the Canvas button on the portal home page. Students will access Canvas through the Canvas Student app on their iPads; there is also a Canvas Parent app that parents can download.

There are times, however, when a teacher makes an adjustment to an assignment that is not mirrored on the website. We try to ensure that this is kept to a minimum, and it is still the student's responsibility to get the accurate assignment in class. Failure to complete or to hand in assignments may have an adverse effect on a student's grades.

The amount of work on a given night may vary; however, we expect that the following is an accurate estimate of the amount of time students should need to spend on homework:

- Grade 6 – 1-1.5 hours
- Grade 7 (Form I) – 1.5-2 hours
- Grade 8 (Form II) – 2-2.5 hours

These times are intended to be a guideline. Please note that every student will work at a different pace. If you find, however, that your child is spending far more or far less than the time suggested here on homework, please call the subject teacher or the advisor to discuss ways in which we can collaborate in support of the student's efforts to work at home. The Director of Studies, school psychologist, and the learning specialist can also be resources for parents and children if they are experiencing difficulty with homework requirements.

It is important to acknowledge that children of middle school age can vary greatly in their ability to be self-motivated, self-directed, and organized. Some children work best in their own rooms out of the way of other family activities and distractions. Others find it helpful to work where a parent can monitor effort and concentration. You may need to spend some time, particularly in the beginning of the school year, working with your child to develop a comfortable routine for evenings.

Library

Books may be checked out for two weeks with the option to renew. Fines are not charged, but it is expected that books will be returned in a timely manner. Overdue notices will be emailed to alert students to any late returns. Books not returned at the end of the year will be assumed lost and a bill will be sent.

Academic Honesty

"I shall strive to be honest in everything that I say or do."

—Middle School Code of Ethics

"Cheat: 1. To deceive by trickery; swindle."

"Plagiarize: 1. To use and pass off (the ideas or writings of another) as one's own. 2. To appropriate for use as one's own passages or ideas from (another)."

—The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language,
2016 Edition

A person who steals the work, thoughts, or ideas of another person is no less a thief than the person who steals money or possessions. A person who uses duplicitous means to give correct information or answers to a teacher, whether in class or on a quiz, test, composition, project, or homework assignment, is just as dishonest as a thief. We therefore regard all forms of academic dishonesty as serious breaches of trust and contrary to the behavior that is expected of everyone in the Middle School community.

Unfortunately, there are occasions when acts of academic dishonesty occur in a school. Such acts include, but are not limited to:

- Copying all or part of a homework assignment from another student or sharing answers electronically.
- Using a crib sheet to give correct answers on a quiz or test.



- Allowing another student to copy one's own work on an assignment, quiz, test, or composition.
- Plagiarism.
- Inappropriate electronic communication in an academic setting.

If it is determined that a student has cheated or plagiarized, the teacher or advisor of that student will notify the parents immediately. The following consequences will apply:

- The student may receive a grade of "O" for the work involved. That grade will be averaged into the term grade during which the incident occurred.
- The Middle School disciplinary system may require any of the following:
 - That the student serve detention.
 - That the student be suspended for one or more days.
 - That the parents of the student meet with the teacher, advisor, Dean of Students, and/or the Head of School.
 - That the student be placed on Disciplinary Probation.
 - That the student will work with the School Counselor to ensure complete understanding.

We understand that children of middle school age do not always have a clear understanding of what constitutes academic dishonesty. We therefore try to prevent occurrences of cheating and plagiarism before they happen. If a student is not sure whether a particular behavior is cheating or plagiarism, he or she should refrain from engaging in the behavior until he or she has discussed the matter with a teacher, advisor, or parent.

Progress Reports and Interims

Teachers issue a report card and comments for each student at the end of each of the three trimesters. In addition, teachers write a progress report for all students midway through the first trimester. Interim reports are issued throughout the year to individual students as teachers communicate more directly with families. Interim reports may detail positive classroom experiences as well as voice concerns about work that does not meet teachers' expectations. Interim reports and progress reports are sent home by email. Parents can also communicate with teachers via e-mail, which is suggested after the receipt of an interim report. Any test that a student fails will be sent home to be reviewed and signed by the parent and returned to school the next day.

Parent Conferences

Parents and students are invited to meet with the child's advisor two times a year, in person and via Zoom. Parents are encouraged to call or email their child's advisor at school if they have questions. A conference may also be scheduled at any time when an advisor, teacher, or parent feels it necessary (see also "Academic Status" below); the easiest way to schedule such a conference is to contact the teacher or advisor at school.

Faculty can be contacted via e-mail. If you need to call and leave a message for a faculty member, call Kristan Fisher at 412-968-3100, who can get a message to a teacher.

Academic Status

When a student faces struggles academically, there are two levels of support that may apply to their academic standing:

Academic Warning

Any student who fails one course at the end of a trimester will be placed on **academic warning**. Any student who earns an effort mark of 1 or 2 in any course, or two effort marks of 2 in any two courses, will also be placed on **academic warning**. In such cases, we will initiate the following:

- A letter will be sent to parents to acknowledge placement of the student on academic warning. The letter will explain the Middle School Academic Status Policy, suggested steps for improvement, and describe what happens if a student does not improve his or her performance in the pertinent subject area(s) by the end of the next trimester.
- If a student is on academic warning for a trimester and continues to put forth low effort and earns another effort mark of 1 or two in any course, or if he or she fails a course for a term, the student may



be placed on academic probation. This decision will be made by the appropriate members of the Middle School faculty or by the Middle School administration in cases where it is not possible to consult with the teachers (i.e., after close of school).

Academic Probation

Any student who fails two or more courses at the end of a trimester will be placed on **academic probation**. Any student who has been on academic warning for a trimester and who does not improve his or her performance or effort as expected may also be put on **academic probation**. In such cases, we will initiate the following:

- A letter will be sent to the parents to acknowledge placement of the student on academic probation. Parents are expected to meet with the appropriate subject teacher(s). The Head of School, the school psychologist, the learning specialist, or the Director of Studies may also attend this conference.
- At the conference, we will determine appropriate goals and expectations for the student. A support plan will also be agreed upon. This plan will specify the time frame during which the student will work to attain the specified goals and expectations. Ordinarily, this time frame will be a trimester.
- As a follow-up to the conference, a letter which summarizes the agreed upon conditions and support plan will be sent to the parents of the student. In some cases, another conference may be scheduled before the end of the specified time frame in order to allow us to review the student's progress in the course(s).

The Middle School faculty will carefully review the status of any student who is on academic probation and who does not meet the expectations agreed upon. The faculty will also consider the status of any student who repeatedly finds himself or herself on academic warning or academic probation during his or her time at the Middle School. Appropriate courses of action in extreme cases as described above include continued academic warning or academic probation, restrictions placed on student participation in competitive sports, advising out, and dismissal.

Promotion Policy

A failing grade in one course may be made up in Shady Side Academy Summer School in order to enter Form I, II, or III. The Head of School or Director of Studies must approve in advance remedial coursework to be taken in other summer schools. Failing two academic courses disqualifies a student from passing to the next grade level. Having grades in the 60s range in two classes may disqualify a student from passing to the next grade level.

Although most students completing a middle school grade go on to the next level, promotion from one grade to the next is not automatic. Before promotion takes place, the Middle School faculty considers each child's entire record: effort, deportment, and participation in school activities as well as academic performance. Should we believe that it would not be in the student's own best interest to be promoted, that student will not be promoted, regardless of whether or not he or she has failed any courses for the year.

Academic Support

During the middle school years, the focus for all students is to become actively engaged in their education and to better understand themselves as learners. Our Learning Specialist, in partnership with classroom teachers, supports student development of study skills, organizational skills, test preparation strategies, and self-advocacy strategies.

All sixth-grade students attend a year-long study skills class that lays the foundation for skills that are reinforced throughout their middle school experience. Students are guided toward the acquisition of self-advocacy skills by learning to formulate questions and create meaningful dialogue in order to meet with teachers effectively.

The Learning Specialist also mentors students with accommodation plans in terms of understanding their learning differences, developing particular strategies that can enhance their academic performance, and providing guidance on how best to utilize their accommodations.



At the Middle School, the students' academic and learning skills continue to develop to ensure a smooth transition to the Senior School.

As students engage with Shady Side's comprehensive and rigorous curriculum, Learning Specialists are on each campus for students who need additional support. While the Learning Specialist can support all students, precedence is given to students with diagnosed learning differences. The support provided to the students aligns with their development as they progress through each division.

Implementation of Educational Accommodations

Students with diagnosed learning differences are required to meet the expectations of our rigorous curriculum. In order for students to receive academic accommodations, a formal diagnosis as part of a psychological, psychoeducational or neuropsychological evaluation completed by a licensed psychologist or neuropsychologist is required. This completed report must be submitted to the Learning Specialist and can be kept confidential.

In order to continue receiving accommodations, students must be re-evaluated every three years. While all recommendations from outside evaluators are considered, each division's administration and learning specialist will determine which accommodations will be provided on that particular campus. Based upon these determinations, the learning specialist will write an accommodation plan. Shady Side Academy, as an independent school, is not required to modify curriculum, provide dedicated 1:1 personnel for in class instruction, or follow all recommendations in 504 service plans or current Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

The following academic accommodations may be provided at Shady Side Academy depending on the division and the needs of the child:

- Extended time on standardized and classroom exams will be given based upon the recommendation of the qualified evaluator, with 50% as the standard. The learning specialist and administrators at a student's division will determine the possible implementation of the recommendation of more than 50% extended time.
- Testing in alternative spaces may be made available.
- Additional testing methods, such as enlarged print, oral testing, or testing with additional breaks, may be provided.
- In the classroom, students may use pre-approved assistive technology devices with the permission of administration and individual faculty.
- If the structure of the class permits, advance notes may be given. This will be determined through discussion between the subject teacher and learning specialist.
- Preferential seating, brief breaks, and allowance for appropriate movement in the classroom may be provided when recommended.
- In specific situations, temporary reduction of classroom assignments may be allowed following approval from the school counselor, learning specialist, school nurse and administration.
- World language exemptions are rarely granted and are determined on a case-by-case basis as approved by the Head of School in consultation with the Learning Specialist and head of the language department. Language exemptions are reassessed and reapproved at each division.

Student Conduct

Shady Side Academy's [Guiding Principles](#) govern everything we do at the Middle School, and all interactions and behavior should be measured against them. Respect, Honesty, Responsibility, Kindness and Safety are the cornerstones of our daily living, and when students veer from them, they often find themselves in a counseling situation with a teacher, their advisor, the Dean of Students, or the school counselor.

The ongoing project of working with children to help them incorporate these principles into their everyday lives is one that we work on daily, and it works best when we do it in concert with parents and families. For this reason, we want students and parents alike to understand that we are striving to help children embody the



Guiding Principles for application in the classroom, on the playing fields, in the locker rooms, and online, and that these principles cannot be separated for use in school and then forgotten on the bus.

All of the adults in our community work together to help children understand that one's behavior—the way we treat one another—is just as important as one's academic achievement. It is important for our students and families to familiarize themselves with the following information.

Academy Anti-Harassment Policy

Harassment and Sexual Harassment

Shady Side Academy has a policy on harassment in general and sexual harassment in particular which is printed here in full. The Middle School will follow the guidelines of the policy. Our efforts to educate our students, as well as our responses to particular occurrences or circumstances, as seem appropriate to the ages of the children who are in our care, will be guided by this policy.

Shady Side Academy is a community in which all members have the right to feel both safe and respected. Everyone is entitled to live, learn, and work in an environment which is free from harassment, hazing and bullying and discrimination based on race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or gender. Such conduct is morally wrong and does not advance the purposes of the institution as stated in the Academy Philosophy. This policy is intended to

1. Educate students, faculty, and staff about the nature of harassment,
2. Encourage members of the Shady Side community to prevent such behavior by discussing offensive conduct, and
3. Stop any existing harassing behavior.

Harassment, hazing, and bullying includes: conduct that has the purpose or effect of interfering unreasonably with an individual's academic or work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile or demeaning environment in which to live, learn, or work. Harassment, hazing, and bullying encompass behavior that is subtle and ambiguous as well as that which is direct and overt.

According to Title VII of the U.S. Civil Rights Act, sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal and physical conduct of a sexual nature such that:

1. Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for academic or employment decisions affecting an individual; or
2. The conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering unreasonably with an individual's academic or work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile or demeaning environment in which to live, learn, or work.

Harassment can take many forms, including electronic communication, and may include repeated sexual or offensive jokes and remarks, derogatory or demeaning names, unwelcome physical contact (such as patting, hugging, or touching), as well as unwanted requests or demands for sexual activity. Perpetrators as well as targets of sexual harassment can be male or female, students, faculty, spouses, or staff. It may involve peers, or a relationship of authority.

Initiation rites tend to be inherently humiliating, exclusive and victimizing. Because such behavior is diametrically opposed to the Academy Philosophy and Objectives, as well as the Guiding Principles, students are not permitted to participate in, orchestrate, encourage or support such activities, even if the recipients are "willing" to participate. We do encourage activities that are welcoming and inclusive of new members. Students who are unsure of the activities they are planning or in which they have been asked to take part should consult with an advisor, coach, teacher or the Head Forms.

Language is a powerful tool that should be used with respect and kindness when addressing members of the community at all times. Demeaning comments or suggestions to another person, group, or class of persons using inappropriate language is unacceptable in the view of the Academy.



No one should be inhibited from reporting what he or she considers to be harassment, hazing, and bullying for fear of reprisal. Therefore, any form of threat or retaliation against anyone who makes a complaint of harassment, hazing, or bullying is itself a violation of this policy and is cause for discipline. Victims should speak with their parents, the personal counselor, or their advisor about the incident(s).

Violations of this policy, whether intended or not, will not be tolerated. Incidents of harassment, hazing, and bullying will be investigated promptly and corrective actions, if appropriate, will be taken immediately. The confidentiality of the complaint and the investigation will be maintained to the extent possible in all cases, and all individuals involved, including the complainant and the accused, are expected to respect the privacy of all other individuals.

A range of circumstances will be considered in determining whether behavior deemed offensive by an individual constitutes harassment, hazing, and bullying. The Academy's response will be based on the nature, frequency, intensity, location, context, and duration of the alleged offensive conduct. The harassment action may be in verbal, written, voice, or electronic form. Anyone who is found to have engaged in these behaviors can be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate dismissal from Shady Side Academy. Language is a powerful tool that should be used with respect and kindness when addressing members of the community at all times. Demeaning comments or suggestions to another person, group, or class of persons using inappropriate language is unacceptable in the view of the Academy.

Definitions (Middle School)

Harassment may be a single act, multiple acts, or a repeated pattern of behavior of a physical, emotional, or psychological nature that is unwelcome and which is either uncomfortable from the view of the recipient or which creates a hostile or threatening environment.

Individuals who are not the direct target of actions may experience a hostile environment because of such actions, and therefore have been subjected to harassment covered by this policy. These can occur in person or via electronic devices. Examples may include:

- hazing, stalking, threats or intimidation of any sort.
- conduct or comments that are demeaning with respect to race, religion, ethnic origin, gender or sexual orientation.
- inappropriate messages (voice, text or visual) communicated through any medium, including a computer network.
- display of offensive drawings, pictures or graffiti.
- false allegations of harassment.
- sexual harassment.

Substantiated cases of false accusations of harassment will result in the school taking appropriate action against the accuser.

Dangerous or harassing internet behavior is in violation of the school's Guiding Principles and may be subject to disciplinary action.

Sexual harassment is a form of harassment that consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Examples of sexual harassment may include:

- sexual comments, questions, jokes, gestures or rumors.
- touching, grabbing, groping or pinching in a sexual way.

Bullying Policy

Shady Side Academy Middle School endeavors to provide children with the opportunity to learn and develop in a safe, stimulating and supportive environment. The purpose of the bullying policy is to ensure that the school community is aware and understands the behavioral standards expected from our students and the possible disciplinary consequences that may occur.



Bullying is defined as a persistent pattern of teasing, name calling, physical contact, non-verbal harassment, exclusion or other intimidating behavior that distresses an individual and creates within that individual the expectation of further harassment. Bullying can be regarded as an imbalance of power, either real or imagined, where victims perceive themselves as helpless and the bully as invincible and threatening.

This extends to **cyber-bullying** which may involve the use of electronic devices, from home or at school, such as computers, laptops, mobile phones, and other devices that can be used to intimidate, harass, expose, tease or cause distress to others.

Our goal is to encourage, develop and foster in the school community:

- Positive relationships among students that are grounded in Shady Side Academy's [Guiding Principles](#)—honesty, respect, kindness, responsibility, and safety.
- Knowledge of appropriate behaviors when interacting with others.
- Sensitivity to the feelings of others and an awareness of how one's comportment may impact the other.
- Skills in relating to and communicating with others.
- Confidence to report incidences of bullying to faculty
- Confidence that all reported incidences of bullying will be acted upon, and appropriate consequences and support mechanisms applied where possible.
- Knowledge of the consequences of bullying.
- Strategies that children can use to deal with and avoid bullying situations.

Behaviors Associated with Bullying

These include (but are not limited to):

- **Physical:** e.g. hitting, kicking, punching, poking or any unwelcomed physical contact.
- **Social:** (including via cyber-bullying) e.g. rumors, ignoring, ostracizing, making derogatory statements (e.g. about a person's lifestyle, religion, culture, appearance, abilities, etc), depriving individual freedom, or exposing personal information.
- **Psychological:** (which may also include cyber-bullying) e.g. threats, stalking, taking personal possessions, notes and comments (via any medium, electronic or otherwise) and blackmail.
- **Verbal:** (including, where applicable, cyber-bullying) examples include:
 - Humiliating put-downs, including name-calling, criticisms, threats to the victim as well as boastful, egotistical, self-centered remarks which are aimed at intimidating the victim.
 - False accusations about others' behavior when in reality the accusers initially cause the reaction from the other person. (For example, a child is held down by others. He/she retaliates by calling them names and is labeled a bully.)
 - Lying in order to intimidate others.

Bullying Discipline Procedure

The following procedure is to be implemented when bullying occurs. Documentation of offenses will be maintained in the school counselor's office. Advisors, the Dean of Students, and the Head of School will receive copies of documentation.

First Incident

- Counseling - student who is doing the bullying will meet with the Dean of Students to discuss incident.
- A "Bully Warning Form - Notification to Parents" will be sent home to parents. The child is expected to explain the incident to his or her parents, who must sign a form indicating knowledge of their child's involvement in a bullying incident. This form must be returned to school on the following school day.

Second Incident

- Detention - student must serve immediate detention



- Letter of Reflection - this exercise will be completed during the detention period. The Letter of Reflection will require parental signature. The signed assignment must be returned to the Dean of Students on the following school day.
- Counseling - Student doing the bullying will meet with the school counselor to discuss future preventative strategies.

Third Incident

- Meeting with Dean of Students, parents, student, advisor and school counselor within 24 hours of the third incident. Parents and student made aware of possible future consequences including suspension. Preventative strategies discussed with parents.
- A third bullying incident may result in an in-house suspension and/or a referral to an outside professional counselor.

Fourth Incident

- In-house suspension.
- Student referred to external professional counseling.
- Parents to meet with the Head of School.

Severity Clause

In cases of particular severity, any of the previously outlined steps may be bypassed. Cyber-bullying: the Head of School and Dean of Students may choose to bypass any or all of the above procedures and meet with the student and parents immediately.

The safety, protection and well-being of all students at Shady Side Academy Middle school is regarded as a core value. In such cases where all strategies used to help the student change the bullying behavior fail and bullying persists, a student may be expelled from the school.

Parent Information on Bullying

Parents can help make SSA a bullying-free environment. All students have a right to attend Shady Side Middle School and feel safe!

Parents, you can help by:

- Being interested and engaged in your child's school, social, athletic and cultural life.
- Empowering your child, whether victim or witness to bullying, to take a stand and not tolerate the behavior.
- Discussing the school's expectations about their behavior and how to best deal with bullying situations that may arise.
- Being observant and looking out for signs that something may be wrong or that your child may be struggling.
- Informing the school if you become aware of any bullying incident so that action may be taken to address and stop the negative behavior.

Signs of Bullying

- A sudden unwillingness to attend school.
- Declining academic performance.
- A decline or total loss of self-confidence.
- A lack or loss of interest in social events.
- Children returning home from school angry, upset, or intolerant.

Bullying is Serious



Bullying is not permissible or tolerated. It is not considered a part of growing up or a “rite of passage” or as an opportunity to build character. The latest federal research supports a strong correlation between bullying and more serious violent acts in the future. There is also strong evidence that suggests that victims of bullying are more likely to suffer from depression and anxiety as well as higher incidents of suicide ([Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration](#)).

Advice for Students

What to do if you are being bullied

Most importantly, you should believe that **you have a right to feel safe and valued.**

- If you are being bullied you should take a stand, take appropriate action and not just accept it.
- Do not retaliate by becoming a verbal or physical bully yourself.
- Don't get angry or show frustration- stand your ground and tell the bully to “cut it out” or “get lost”.
- You can remind the bully of the school's bully policy and the potential consequences for his/her negative behavior.
- Talk about being bullied with your friends and family. This is not something to be ashamed of-the solution to the problem involves other people's intervention.
- Build your own protection by establishing friends.
- Be smart and avoid hot spots or high-risk places where you know bullying may occur.
- Remember that all of the faculty and staff at SSA Middle School want our school to be bully-free. Feel encouraged to come and speak to us if you need help deciding how to handle the situation or if you need an adult to take action.

What to do if you witness a bullying incident

- If possible, intervene while the bullying is happening by interrupting, questioning or echoing others.
- Report the incident to a faculty member or parent as soon as possible. Don't be afraid to come forward, as you can do so with complete confidentiality.
- Offer friendship and support to the victim, encouraging them to get help from an adult, family, or friends.

Policy on Alcohol & Other Drugs

This policy has been adapted from the Shady Side Academy Senior School Policy on Alcohol & Other Drugs.

Shady Side Academy's Senior School's policy on alcohol and other drugs is printed here. The Middle School will follow the guidelines of this policy with two modifications:

1. “Disciplinary Process” in the Middle School will refer to the deliberations and recommendations of the Student Advisory Committee and their recommendation to the Head of School.
2. Given the ages of the children who are in our care, we may adjust our response in consideration of grade level or particular circumstance.

Drugs, Alcohol, Illegal Substances

You are expected to be completely free of illegal drugs and alcohol while enrolled at Shady Side Academy. Substance use and abuse not only inhibits and prevents the mental processes essential for learning, but also has clear deleterious effects on the adolescent brain development and general well-being. The use of these substances interferes with responsible behavior, jeopardizing the safety of the individual and others.

In an effort to keep our students healthy and safe in accordance with the laws of Pennsylvania, the Academy prohibits:

1. The provision, use, transport or possession of alcohol or other illegal drugs or substances by students.



2. The possession of drug paraphernalia or containers associated with drug or alcohol use, including but not limited to e-cigarettes, vaporizers, and any other type of electronic nicotine delivery system.
3. Remaining in the presence of individuals who are preparing to use or using vaporizers, e-cigarettes, etc., is also prohibited.
4. The misuse of prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications or substances.

We realize we can be only as effective as the support we garner from the entire community: students, faculty, administration, staff, parents and trustees. We strongly urge parents to take a firm stand against both the use or possession of and provision of mind-altering substances, including alcohol, to our students. We must also acknowledge that ultimately the decision to use is the student's own.

Possession, use, sale, transportation, etc.

The possession, use, sale, transportation of alcohol or other illegal drugs by students are prohibited at Shady Side Academy or at any school-related event, whether held on- or off-campus.

Possession, consumption or being found under the influence of any amount of mind-altering substances or alcohol on campus, at any school-sponsored event, or when brought to the Academy through a highly credible source such as a law-enforcement officer or an administrator from another school, is considered a violation of school policy and will likely result in an appearance before the Discipline Committee.

All items involved in an offense will be confiscated by Shady Side Academy. These items will be disposed of according to the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

All students entering Shady Side Academy will be educated about the life-threatening dangers inherent in the use of alcohol and other mind-altering substances and about the disease of chemical dependency in our health curriculum. Through this educational process we hope to raise the students' awareness and prevent them from making decisions that will hinder them from reaching their potential.

“In the Presence Of”

Knowingly and willingly being in the presence of any of the above will be considered a violation of a major school rule. Any student knowingly and willingly in the presence of such activity will likely appear before the Discipline Committee.

Drug and Alcohol Screening Tools

In instances when questions about a student's use exist and the possibility of drug and alcohol screening tools are available, a student may be asked to utilize a screening tool to provide clear information about usage. If a student refuses, that refusal will be viewed as an admission of guilt.

Consequences

If a student is found in possession of, using or under the influences of, selling, providing, transporting, partnering in transporting, or distributing alcohol or other drugs to others, he/she will likely appear before the Discipline Committee and/or be dismissed. In egregious incidents where safety and lack of respect for the community are involved, a student may be dismissed for a first offense. A repeat violation of the alcohol and drug policy will typically result in immediate dismissal from the Academy.

Counseling Intervention for Alcohol and Drugs

The Academy is committed to the health and safety of all students. Any member of the Shady Side community (students, faculty, staff and parents) can and should consult with the counselor or nurse when concerned about a student's behavior, decisions, actions or attitudes and their possible relationship with substance use. The counselor and nurse are supportive of and knowledgeable about the handling of any such information.

The counselor will judge whether or not the behavior warrants a meeting, a referral, intervention with the student and his/her family, or another response that is appropriate to the situation. The counselor, alone or with



the concerned community member, if appropriate, will talk with the student, and will contact the student's family in the presence of the student. The counselor will determine on a "need-to-know" basis who to inform of this intervention and may elect to inform one, all, or some of the following individuals: dean of student and residential life, form, dean, advisor, dorm parent, coach or head of school. Any written documentation related to interventions of this sort will be stored in the counselor's office and will be the sole property of the counselor. If significant treatment is recommended and/or is in the best interest of the student, a medical leave or other non-disciplinary response may be the best option.

Technology

Shady Side Academy Middle School students need to be aware that the school rules governing behavior apply in all areas, including in the use of technology. Electronic messages or photos that are inappropriate are unacceptable, either by computer or mobile devices, and can fall under the school's disciplinary code. **Student cell phone and smart watch use is prohibited during the school day except where permitted on an individual basis by a teacher.**

All cell phones should be kept in homerooms, and parents should not call or text their children while they are in school, or expect their children to call or text them during the day. School phones are available for student use. Cell phones should never be used in the locker rooms. Students may never photograph or film another student without his or her permission, or forward such media.

Technology Acceptable Use Policy

Shady Side Academy has set guidelines in an effort to promote the responsible use of technology in education. The use of the computer network is a privilege and not a right. All members of the community should follow an ethical and respectful approach in using the network. Failure to comply with regulations may result in suspension of privileges or removal from the network. It is the responsibility of the student to be familiar with and abide by the policies outlined in the [Acceptable Use Policy Handbook](#). If the student cannot locate his or her copy, please contact the Technology Help Desk at (412) 968-3210 to request a copy or click on the link in the previous sentence.

It is a violation to:

- Login as another user or attempt to login as someone else.
- Copy, alter, move, or delete files that do not belong to you.
- Install, remove, or alter software without permission from the Director of Technology.
- View a document that does not belong to you.
- Send letters or e-mail of an abusive nature.
- Send messages that may hamper the performance of the system (e.g., spam messages).
- Distract others with messages.
- Seek access to areas of the Administrative network.
- Use school computers for outside activities without approval from the teacher.
- Try to circumvent security limits set to your account.

Any inappropriate internet activity involving Shady Side Academy students, including, but not limited to, photos, web pages, text or videos, is subject to Shady Side disciplinary action.

Dangerous or harassing internet behavior is in violation of the school's [Guiding Principles](#) and may be subject to disciplinary action.

iPads

At Shady Side Middle School, we are committed to creating a rigorous and inspiring learning environment, where student learning is enhanced through a variety of instructional methods and experiences. The iPad is one of the many powerful teaching tools that we have at our disposal; our 1:1 program allows students to learn through emotionally resonant media sources, to expand their collaboration and communication abilities, and to showcase their own creativity and understanding.



As technology becomes an increasingly present part of our world, we also believe it is important to help our middle schoolers create appropriate technological habits and boundaries to ensure they are being resourceful and responsible digital citizens. With our balanced approach to iPad use and instruction, we ensure that we are maximizing the benefits of technology and prioritizing our students' academic and socio-emotional growth. Our use of the iPad as an instructional tool is rooted in the following goals:

- Fostering creativity and critical thinking
- Enhancing collaboration and communication
- Promoting empowered and reflective learning
- Developing responsible digital citizenship

Our technology program is also aligned with the [International Technology Education Standards](#) and connected to the Framework for 21st Century Learning.

Guidelines & Expectations for iPad Use

Unstructured Times:

1. No iPads before 8 a.m., even for schoolwork.
2. Use iPad responsibly for schoolwork during conference and study hall.
3. Keep iPads closed in the hallways during transition time.

Class Time:

1. iPad must be closed unless directed by the teacher to open it.
2. iPad is used for classwork during class time, no game playing during class time.
3. iPad may be used to watch teacher created videos. You must have appropriate headphones to do so.
4. iPads should be charged every evening to allow for class use during the day.

Middle School Disciplinary System

It is important for our students and families to familiarize themselves with the following information. Our discipline system is one component of the learning process. Its purpose is to address and amend student behavior that is inappropriate and harmful to learning. It is important to note that the primary objective of the system is to teach students a more suitable set of behaviors and not to solely provide punishment to offenders. We expect the students at the Middle School to behave with common courtesy in their dealings with each other, adults, and visitors. Consideration of others is an essential element of a school environment. The disciplinary system at the Middle School addresses a range of behaviors, recognizing that students at this age are still learning how to act thoughtfully and appropriately. It is our goal to help them in this endeavor by calling attention to misbehavior, providing reasonable consequences, and advising them on how to improve their behavior.

The system is not intended to deal with incidents that involve forgetfulness, disorganization, or intellectual immaturity. These matters – forgetting class materials, leaving materials behind, coming to class unprepared – need to be addressed outside of the disciplinary system by teachers utilizing a variety of incentives and disincentives unique to each situation. These types of offenses can, of course, become disciplinary matters if they are often repeated and the offender fails to follow teacher suggestions for resolution of the problem. The disciplinary system is used as a last resort for these things and not as an initial response to offenses.

Should a student bring the name of Shady Side Academy into disrepute he or she will be held accountable and may face disciplinary consequences, possibly including separation from the school.

Levels of Disciplinary Action

Discussion

A good disciplinary system endeavors to teach the students what is expected in terms of behavior. At the beginning of the year, our goal is to remind returning students and to explain to new students our expectations.



When expectations are not met our first step is to explain expectations to the students and discuss what happened. If over time the student's behavior is not modified, we will move to the following set of responses.

Lunch Time Out

Lunch Time Outs are assigned for what we would consider a lower-level offense, or the repeated occasions when discussion has had little impact. A student spends the first ten minutes of lunchtime in a designated, monitored area with no socializing in this immediate consequence. As lunch time is generally seen as prime social time, this is meant as a deterrence against minor infractions such as (but not limited to) repeated talking out, forgetting materials repeatedly, tardiness, and minor disruption. With more than four lunch time outs of a similar reason, a student will automatically meet with the Dean of Students in a Level I detention.

Level 1 Detention

A level 1 detention is issued for a larger infraction, such as (but not limited to) disrespect, safety, profanity, cell phone use in the locker room, dishonesty or significant disruption. Detention will take place that very day whenever possible, and if for any reason it is not possible it will take place the following day. This consequence is meant to be immediate. The student will meet with the Dean of Students during athletics where s/he will write a reflection piece or have a conversation on the incident that landed him or her there. If a reflection is written, it is checked over by the Dean of Students and emailed to the parents, the advisor, the teacher who issued the detention, the Dean of Students, and the school counselor.

Level 2 Detention

A level 2 detention is more serious than the standard detention, in that the student will then automatically be discussed at the Student Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting at the end of the term. The detention will be served that day, and the process is similar to the one described above. A level 2 detention can be given for the following types of behavior, including but not limited to:

- Academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism)
- Stealing
- Lying
- Dismissal from class
- Destruction of property
- Threats
- Harassment or bullying
- Serious computer misuse
- Bringing unsafe items to school
- Physical violence

Serving a Level 1 Detention or Level 2 Detention

Detentions will be served during athletics and will take priority over any athletic contests or after-school activities. Parents will receive an email with the reflection written by the student and/or information about the conversation that was had that afternoon, which also serves as notification of the incident, and parents are asked to respond to the Dean of Students indicating that you have received the email. Depending upon the severity of the incident, a conversation between the parent(s) and the advisor may be warranted.

Student Advisory Committee (SAC)

The Student Advisory Committee is a group that meets at the end of each term to discuss students who have had disciplinary issues. It can also meet on an as-needed basis. The Student Advisory Committee consists of the Head Form Advisors, the Dean of Students, the Assistant Head of School and the Head of School. It will also include the advisor of any student being discussed (to act as an advocate).

Offenses which the school will not tolerate, and which are deemed most serious (such as the use of drugs and alcohol, theft, overt disrespect, vandalism, physical violence, dishonesty, threats, and harassment) may result in an extended suspension, probation, or expulsion. Infractions of this magnitude will involve an internal "write-up", counseling of the student, and immediate notification of the parents. The SAC will meet to review



the school's response to the offense, and this will be followed by a parent conversation with the Head of School and/or the Dean of Students. Any decision for expulsion will remain the responsibility of the Head of School with the recommendation of the SAC. The student's behavioral record will be reviewed by the Committee as part of the decision for removal from the school.

SAC will also meet regularly throughout the year to discuss the disciplinary standing of students, to keep track of students who accumulate detentions and to monitor the progress of students on warning or probation. In rare cases the Head of School may step in instead of the SAC.

Letter of Concern and Disciplinary Warning

At the end of each trimester, the SAC meets to determine if a student should be given a letter of concern or disciplinary warning. Students are placed on the SAC agenda when they have accumulated a number of detentions. A letter of concern is usually given to a student who has not had a history of disciplinary action, and the parents are informed that their child has been discussed at the SAC meeting. A disciplinary warning letter is given to a student who has accumulated a significant amount of disciplinary action but is not at the level which warrants probation. Students are generally placed on warning for one trimester; at the end of that time their status is reviewed by the Student Advisory Committee.

Disciplinary Probation

Students who accumulate an unusual number of detentions may be placed on Disciplinary Probation with the recommendation of the Student Advisory Committee. Parents will be notified by a phone call and a letter when a student is placed on Disciplinary Probation.

In unusual cases it may happen that a student's first offense is egregious, in which case he or she may go straight to probation without any prior detentions. Students on Disciplinary Probation may serve a one-day in-house suspension as an automatic consequence, and they will be required to meet with the school counselor and Dean of Students to work out a plan for future behavior.

Depending on the offense it is possible for a student to serve a multiple-day in-house suspension. Their participation in any school-related events, such as field trips, will be at the discretion of the Head of School. Students are generally placed on Probation for one trimester; at the end of that time, their status is reviewed by the Student Advisory Committee.

If there has been no improvement, the student may remain on Probation and may serve suspensions instead of detentions. Further misbehavior may lead eventually to dismissal or to an enrollment agreement being withheld. It is possible for students to begin a school year on Disciplinary Probation and to be passed on to the Senior School on Probation.

Athletics

Athletic Philosophy

The Middle School Athletics program encourages active participation from students and considers athletics to be an important co-curricular component. All Middle School students participate in an athletic or activity option at the conclusion of the day, from approximately 2:20-3:45 p.m. The offerings in each of the three seasons include competitive interscholastic options, non-competitive options, academic, and art options. Students are required to participate in an activity every season, and at least one season every year must be an athletic choice. School policy is that the competitive teams with students in 7th and 8th grades will have no more than two games a week and students on teams in the 6th grade will have a maximum of one game per week.



Athletic Objectives

Regardless of the athletic team or activity a child has selected, the following are key points that we expect each student to accomplish throughout a season:

- Demonstrate competency in the fundamental skills used in each sport/activity.
- Demonstrate continued development and understanding of a particular sport/activity at each grade level.
- Exhibit self-discipline, sportsmanship and teamwork, and understanding the value of each in every sport.
- Understand that the values of self-discipline, sportsmanship and teamwork can be applied in daily life, not only on a playing field.
- Understand the challenges of competition.

SSA Sportsmanship

Parents and students alike are expected to be ambassadors of Shady Side Academy whether on the SSA grounds or at another school. The rivalry between schools is part of competition and provides the air of excitement but disrespect towards officials, opponents and team members is not to be tolerated. Sportsmanship is also a reflection of Shady Side Academy's [Guiding Principles](#).

Remember:

- The players play.
- The coaches coach.
- The officials officiate.
- The fans cheer for their team while being respectful of the opponent.

“No Cut” Policy and Wait-Lists for Teams

We do not “cut” a student from an SSA team; for some students it is their first chance to try an activity and for some students there is experience and strong interest with a particular sport. With that “no-cut” policy in mind, our team rosters are created based on a “first come first served” basis. The sign-up period begins in mid-May with an email home, and it is important for parents to sign their child up once the email notification goes out.

Late To School & Competitive Participation

In order to participate in any afternoon/evening/weekend school-related event, students must be in class by 9:30 a.m. If a student is tardy due to a medical appointment, a medical excuse from the doctor's office must be turned in at the main office when the student arrives at school in order to allow their participation in a game/meet/competition that afternoon or weekend.

Exemption Policy

Here at Shady Side, we have an exceptional after-school program that includes athletics and other non-sports related activities. Students participating in these activities may find some of them new, while they may already be proficient in others. We recognize that some students have athletic passions that go above and beyond the standard, and to which they devote many, many hours outside of school.

To help foster that passion, Form I and Form II students may petition for an exemption from one or two seasons of a SSA Middle School activity. As we feel it is important for sixth graders to take part in all aspects of the SSA life in their first year, exemptions are typically not approved at that level. For more information on applying for an exemption please contact our Director of Athletics.

