

August 19, 2024

Dear MMS Families,

I am delighted to welcome you to the 2024-2025 school year, and I am grateful for the warm welcome to the Middlesex Middle School Community that I have received from so many of you. I hope that your summers have been a balance of rest and joy.

One of my favorite children's books is *Miss Rumphius* by Barbara Cooney. Told from the perspective of her great-niece "little Alice," the book recounts the story of Miss Alice Rumphius, a librarian who traveled the world before coming home to live by the sea; she becomes known as the Lupine Lady for scattering seeds, which grow fields and fields of lupines. At the story's end, the narrator recalls:

"When I grow up," I tell her, "I too will go to faraway places and come home to live by the sea."

"That is all very well, little Alice," says my aunt, "but there is a third thing you must do."

"What is that?" I ask.

"You must do something to make the world more beautiful."

As a parent and an educator, this story resonates with me, and I believe it embodies the shared work of teaching and raising our children. Our students in grades six, seven, and eight emerge from childhood to see themselves as young adults with the capacity to both explore developing interests and affect significant change. As the Darien Public Schools Vision of the Graduate proclaims, "We believe we will graduate individuals who have a strong academic foundation and are prepared to use the knowledge and skills they have acquired to cast and fulfill a purposeful vision for themselves, their community, and the world." It is our intention that through our continued work to nurture their Communication, Creativity, Curiosity, Empathy, Independence, and Integrity, our students feel inspired and empowered: In short, to cast and fulfill that purposeful vision - or to make the world a more beautiful place.

We are ready to welcome students on Wednesday, August 28 because of the hard work this summer of many staff members - notably our phenomenal custodial team and excellent administrative assistants. Thank you also to Dr. Caitlin O'Keefe (Grade 8 Assistant Principal), Dr. Felicia Bellows (Grade 7 Assistant Principal), and Mrs. Sarah Ramaley (Special Education Program Director for Grades 6-8) for their leadership this summer through the transition. We welcome Tim Monahan to our team, who will be working with our Grade 6 students. We will be hosting a [Meet & Greet](#) for parents and guardians on Friday, August 23 at 9:30 am and Monday, August 26 at 6:00 pm in the MMS library; we will plan to record and post one of those sessions.

Aspen will open to families at the end of the day on Thursday, August 22. At that time you will be able to see your child(ren)'s schedule and also confirm your current account information and complete sign offs; our updated student handbook will be posted to the school website by the beginning of next week. Should you find an error or have a question about your child(ren)'s schedule, please reach out to their school counselor for assistance. We appreciate your understanding that there may be some changes in individual schedules prior to August 28 and encourage you to look with your child at their schedule on Tuesday, August 27 so they know where to report for Flex on Wednesday morning.

We look forward to partnering with you as parents, with our students, and with our Darien community in the exciting year ahead!

Sincerely,

Kate Dimoulas (she/her/hers)
Middlesex Middle School Principal

Helpful Information for the Beginning of the Year

First Days of School

School begins on Wednesday, August 28. Our school day begins at 7:57 am and ends at 2:22 pm; our bell schedule remains the same and can be found [here](#). For the first three days of school, we will begin the day with an hour-long FLEX period to get to know their teams, offer extra time to assist students in learning the schedule rotation, how to use lockers, and other important information. Teachers will pass out supply lists during the first few days of school; a notebook, folder, and writing utensil is all that is needed for the first day.

Morning Extra Help will begin the week of September 16, and the late bus will begin running after school the week of September 23.

Drop off/pick up

Thank you for following traffic patterns and for respecting our neighbors by not parking on Edgerton, Ridgley, or Colony. We ask that you do not enter the bus loop to drop off/pick up your students in the lower parking lot, as it disrupts the flow of traffic. Students may exit cars as soon as they pull up to the curb, and report to the gym or to their teacher if they have signed up for extra help. Please remind students who walk to or from school to only cross at the designated crosswalk.

Personal Smart Devices

As communicated in Dr. Addley's letter home on DATE, Darien Public Schools is implementing a [PK-8 Personal Smart Device Plan Smart](#). Should you decide to send your child(ren) to school with a smart device (such as a smartphone or smart watch), that device will need to be off and away as soon as they enter the building and stored in their lockers for the duration of the school day. We believe that this plan will support the best possible conditions for learning and social emotional engagement for our students. Should you need to communicate a message to your child during the school day, or if they need to reach out to you, our administrative assistants in the Main Office will be able to assist. In the event that it is necessary to pick up your child's device, you will be able to do so after school in the Main Office from 2:30-4:00 Monday through Friday. We appreciate in advance your partnership and will plan for ongoing communication and monitoring of this plan's implementation and impact.

Attendance

Student attendance at school is a strong predictor of positive outcomes. If a student is going to be absent for all or part of the day, it is the responsibility of the parent to notify the school by leaving a message on the attendance line at 203-655-2518, option 3. Students who need to be dismissed early, such as for a medical appointment, should come to school with a note from a parent/guardian stating the time of dismissal and reason for the absence; parents may also leave a message on the attendance line. Please pick up your child in front of the main door.

Health & Wellness

Our students' health and wellness is of the utmost priority; students should stay home from school when they are sick. Please communicate with our school counselors and [nurses](#) should you have any social-emotional or medical concerns.

Communication

Your teachers will share with you the team website for finding homework assignments. Teachers use Google classroom as a way of posting class assignments and lessons; parents can sign up as guardians of their children to see Classroom announcements.

We highly value the essential relationship between family and school in addressing the needs of the whole child. Please explore the [Chain of Communication](#) on the DPS website to help you locate the appropriate contacts.

Middlesex Parents Association

I am grateful for the strong partnership we have with the MPA and am already in ongoing communication with Co-Presidents Gulay Philip and Carrie Vomacka, who have offered me a warm welcome to the MMS Community. *The mission of the Middlesex Parent Association (MPA) is to promote understanding and communication between parents and the school through an exchange of ideas and consideration of matters of mutual interest and to make volunteers available for service in the school.* The MPA communicates about all of the events through a weekly newsletter called the MPN (Middlesex Parent Newsletter). This newsletter is delivered to your inbox every Sunday night at 6 pm. It includes information on dates/deadlines, events happening at MMS, and broader community events for our middle schoolers. If you wish to sign up for the MPA newsletter, you can do so [here](#) or on the website www.middlesexpto.com (“About the MPA” > “MPN Newsletter”).

Welcome to New Faculty

- Mr. Trevor Knight will be teaching Grade 8 Social Studies on the Teal team
- Ms. Patti O’Meara will be supporting students in Grade 6 as a School Psychologist
- Ms. Jill Doherty will be supporting students in Grade 6 as a Speech Language Pathologist
- Ms. Karla Greto is joining Middlesex Middle School as our Teen Talk Counselor

We look forward to welcoming a Grade 6 Art teacher soon as well!

Open Houses

Open House will run from 6:00-8:00 on September 16 (Grade 6), September 17 (Grade 7), and September 18 (Grade 8).