

CDM MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVIVAL GUIDE 101



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Introduction

Congratulations on making it to middle school! Goodbye to the line leaders, playgrounds, and having just one teacher. The next chapter of your life will be the start of changing classes, navigating locker rooms, engaging in late-night studying (depending on your teacher), exploring clubs and sports, and building new social connections. However, don't be afraid of changes!

Embracing them has helped me make my Middle School years the most memorable. It has taught me valuable lessons such as independence and avoiding procrastination that I will carry into high school. With the help of friends with different perspectives, I compiled this guide to help you not just survive but thrive in your middle school journey at CDM.



First Day

A new campus, new teachers, new students, and new schedules will all probably make you overwhelmed, but here are a few tips.

- **Things You Should Bring:** You will need to bring a map of the school, two copies of your schedule, a pencil, paper and an eraser. The map will help you locate all your classes in case you get lost. You will need two copies of your schedule in case you lose one of them, so put one in your backpack and the other in your pocket. Your schedule will help you figure out which classes you have and the room number they are in. Pencils, paper, and erasers are basic school materials you should have with you at all times.

Binders vs folders: For your classes, you can either bring eight colorful folders (one for each period) or two binders for even and odd periods. Folders are lighter to carry and easier to take out during each class, so you don't have the whole binder open for just one period. Binders are heavier but easier to remember to pack, reducing the risk of forgetting your material for a class. -ET

- **Arrive Early:** You will want to arrive at least 30 minutes before school starts so that you will have enough time to find your classes. You will definitely want to locate all your classrooms beforehand so that they will be way easier to find during your school day.

If you can, I recommend coming to school sometime over the summer to locate your classes beforehand. -ET

- **Find Your Friends:** The first day is always nerve-wracking, but don't forget that you are not alone. Most students probably feel the same way. Try to find people you know before school starts. This will ease your anxiety. Finding your classes with a friend is always helpful.
- **Don't Be Afraid to Ask for Help:** If you ever feel lost or confused, ask an older student or teacher for help. Remember, the older students were once in your shoes, so they will most likely help you find your way around the school.

On the first day, there will be students with ASB shirts on campus to help you find your classes. -ET

“On my first day of school, I was standing outside a classroom that was on my schedule all alone. I thought it was very odd that I was the only person standing outside my class waiting to go inside, so I asked around. I flagged down a few high schoolers and checked with them to make sure I was in the right classroom. It took a teacher to realize that I was standing outside my 7th-period classroom when I should be in my 6th-period! I ended up being late to my 6th period, but I was thankful that I was able to ask around.” -M.T.



Lunch/Cafeteria

Lunch in middle school is always the most hectic time of the day. Students scramble to find a lunch table, while the lunch line can seem disorganized and chaotic. At first, it can feel overwhelming but don't fret because these next tips will help you adjust.

- **Find a Place to Sit:** Most people don't think about lunchtime before school starts, but this is important. Find your friends beforehand to come up with a plan for a location to eat lunch. During the first week of school, it's nice to have already a place in mind to go to. As the school year progresses, you will feel comfortable going to other tables as you are making new friends.
- **School Food:** Depending on what they are serving, the cafeteria's food quality can vary greatly. The food is free, so some students don't worry about bringing their own food and just eat whatever the school serves. However, you can bring your own lunch. You can also have your lunch delivered through various food services like Uber Eats or DoorDash. In addition, there are restaurants such as Quiet Woman and Mutt's that work directly with CdMMS/HS. You can go to their website and set up a meal plan. There is a large table by the front office where you will go and pick up your food. Quiet Woman/Mutt's are delivered daily and staffed, so they are more reliable than DoorDash, etc.

If you ordered food, try to pick it up as soon as you can so you have enough time to find your order and eat it since lunch break is only 30 minutes. -ET

- **Lunch Line:** At CDM Middle School, the lunchtime experience can be quite daunting. You might witness a chaotic mass of students from both middle and high school, all eagerly vying for their turn to grab their meals. In such a bustling environment, it may seem challenging to navigate through the crowd and ensure you get your food in a timely manner. The best way to avoid this mass is to either get to the line early or to let the blob's collective energy push you forward.

"I was lucky, and I had some friends going into middle school, but what we did was we found a table that we would stay at throughout middle school. Get a table like this that is preferably under cover if it rains where you eat since that's what we did. I like to go to the vending machines during lunch and break, where I meet and have quick conversations with people from my classes. This and just going up to them at their own table and asking about the classes they're in is an excellent way to start a conversation and make a new friend. Then when

you have a friend at another table, you can become friends with their friends too. Bring water to school because that's what you'll need the most, and maybe a couple of snacks, but you will need more time to eat and socialize. -S.D

"I handle the crazy lunch line by playing little games with my friends." - C.P

"One time, I was eating lunch and talking with my friends when a seagull pooped on Jaana's sweater, and honestly? It was hilarious. My friends and I couldn't stop laughing, and from then on, whenever a bird swoops down low on our table Jaana screams and ducks. I don't usually get cafeteria food but good places to sit are near the quad under the overhead thingy. All the tables near the cafeteria are good because there is more sunshine, and it's closer to the cafeteria if there are some people who want that food." - E.S.



Bathrooms

Bathrooms in middle school are an unavoidable topic, often overlooked and rarely discussed.

However, they don't only serve as just a place to do your thing, but they can be a social space for some students. Hopefully, these next few tips will help you learn more about bathrooms.

- **Choose Carefully:** Speaking from experience, I can confidently say that there are “good” bathrooms and “bad” bathrooms. Most high school bathrooms are “bad” bathrooms, and it's best to avoid them if possible. However, there are some “good” bathrooms, like the drama bathroom or the PE bathroom. These bathrooms tend to be cleaner and less crowded.
- **Go With a Friend:** Bathrooms can sometimes be intimidating, but going with a friend is always nice. Boys and girls alike both go with friends to avoid trouble and to ease the nerve-wracking experience of a middle school bathroom.
- **Don't Loiter:** In my two years at middle school, I've heard my fair share of stories and anecdotes from friends. Sometimes, bathrooms can be the perfect place for stirring up trouble with the lack of supervision. The best thing to do is to go in and do your thing and get out as soon as possible.

“I prefer avoiding the bathrooms like I never used them in middle school unless it was an emergency. Bring hand sanitizer because most of the time, they run out of soap. If you need to use the bathroom, go during class because it's really awkward when people are fixing themselves up and not actually using it. As a middle schooler, trying to go to the middle school bathrooms because the high school ones would obviously have high schoolers in them, and that's really scary. Also, wherever you go into any bathroom, try not to make awkward eye contact with the people already there. Just ignore them and do what you need to. I always prefer bringing a friend with me, so you're not alone.” -S.D



Social Life

In elementary school, you probably knew everybody in your grade, but in middle school, the student population expands significantly. With incoming students from various schools, you'll find yourself surrounded by a larger and more diverse group of peers. This means you will have the opportunity to meet students from different backgrounds.

- **Don't Be Afraid to Meet New People:** Middle school is a very social place, and it is very important to be friendly. Try to meet new people with different personalities and interests, as this can lead to new friendships. You can meet new friends through shared interests or learning about new topics. I guarantee you will have a lot of fun making friends with those around you.
- **Be Around the Right People:** Middle school has a very diverse student population which unfortunately means there will be a small percentage of students that will cause some trouble. You should try to hang out with students that you can relate to or have common interests with, such as a sport. However, make sure they are "good" people as you will be with them for the next few years.

You might have a group of close friends during elementary school. These friendships can evolve as you and your peers find new interests and priorities. You may not feel as close to them anymore. This is a natural process, and my advice is to be open-minded about making new friends. -ET

- **Peer Pressure:** We've all been taught not to succumb to peer pressure, but I'd like to share my own personal perspective on the matter. Listen to that inner voice inside you that tells you what feels right and what doesn't. If a situation goes against your values or makes you uncomfortable, it's perfectly okay to say no. This will keep you out of trouble, and it can determine if you are hanging out with the right friends.
- **Bullying:** I'm sure you've had the talk about bullying telling you to "not take it to heart" or to "just walk away." However, I'm here to discuss how actually to prevent bullying. There is a difference between bullying and teasing. Bullying is intended to hurt someone, while teasing is just light-hearted fun. My suggestion is to respond in an assertive manner; it doesn't need to be anything clever, but standing your ground and projecting confidence are effective strategies. By doing so, you show the bully that their actions won't intimidate you. This usually works, and they

don't want to mess with you anymore.

"Be yourself. Introduce yourself to others. Be nice. If you are an introvert, connect to another person through shared interests, don't be afraid to talk to them about it. They're probably also trying to find a friend to talk about it with."

-C.P

"Middle school is the start of all the drama. You're gonna lose some friends, but the best thing to do is to move on and make new friends who you're going to know longer and have a stronger bond with. Making friends is going to become easier the longer you're in school but I say talking to people in your classes is one of the easiest ways, especially because everyone is going through the same stress of middle school. Then you can talk to them outside of class and become genuine friends. I personally didn't start hanging out with people outside of school until late 7th grade, and now I hang out with people all the time. Just be yourself and have a filter (don't say anything you're going to get in trouble for by the person), and you will make friends."

-S.D

"There's really not a lot of that (Bullying). Respect others' personal space and keep in mind that everyone has their own thoughts and opinions. I've never had a real bully, partly because I don't go out trying to make enemies. Usually, if you're kind to people and compliment them, they'll leave you alone."

-C.P



Procrastination

We all know the saying “Don’t procrastinate,” but despite that, we still find ourselves falling into that trap. In middle school, the effects of procrastination can exponentially impact your grades since you are juggling eight classes of schoolwork. These next tips will prevent you from being overwhelmed and hopefully help you maintain your desired grades.

- **Use the Schedule on Schoology:** Schoology offers a helpful feature displaying when your assignments are due on the home page. It lists them from top to bottom in order of which assignment is due first and which is due last. This helps you prioritize your school work efficiently and avoids any late work. I recommend checking it every evening to make sure you have everything completed before the next school day.
- **Do a Little Bit Every Day:** If you have an assignment that you know will take a long time, then you should work on it in increments. First, count the days until it's due, then create a schedule by distributing the workload in smaller sections to be completed each day. Stay consistent, and commit to working on the assignment every day, even if it's just for a short time. Review your progress and adjust your schedule if needed. This makes even the most difficult assignments more manageable.

“As a future freshman, I still procrastinate. I always end up leaving things to the last minute because I know I’ll finish it on time but barely, and it causes lots of stress and isn’t as good and thorough as I would hope. I don’t like stress it makes me frustrated and so what I plan on doing is finishing the work I receive as soon as I can. For example, I did my asb application the night of and I was stressing so much that I got rejected. So I say get it over with.” -S.D

“Just realize that either way, you’re going to have to do the assignment. It’s better to get over with it sooner so you can watch TikTok and not have to worry about it.”

-C.P.



Sports

You might already be very athletic or not at all, but CDM offers all levels of sports. CDM has a very diverse amount of sports ranging from cross-country to water polo. These next tips will help you understand how sports work and why you should join one.

- **Team Friendships:** Joining a sports team can be a great way to get to know other students with a shared interest in the sport. It helps forge new connections within the community and can strengthen bonds between your friends.
- **Sports are Fun:** Sports in middle school are fun and friendly. You will compete with other middle schools, which helps build school spirit. You can choose a sport that you are already familiar with or a completely new sport that you want to try out. Just have fun.
- **Tryouts:** Some sports, like basketball and volleyball, have tryouts that will cut you from the team if you don't make it. However, there are others, like cross-country, which are open to everyone. The time and dates for the tryouts will be posted on Schoology before the start of the season for each sport.

If you don't make the tryouts, you can always talk to the coaches and ask for tips for improvement. Don't be too bummed out. You can try out again the following year or try a completely new sport. -ET

- **Practices:** Be prepared to make time after school for sports practices. They are usually held 1-3 times a week, depending on the sport, and are a ton of fun if you do them with friends.

"I play volleyball outside of school, and so I decided to join the middle school team. This is a really good way to make friends because since you all joined the team or at least went to the tryouts, it means you share similar interests. So I say join a sport you're interested in because it will help you make friends that bond over the same love for the sport." -S.D

"I play tennis. Sports are a great way to connect with new people. I've made many lifelong friends through tennis. "

-C.P



Academics

Having eight periods means having eight teachers with different teaching styles and expectations. Understand your learning style and adapt your study strategies accordingly.

Hopefully, these next tips can help you ace your tests and maintain your grades.

- **Tests:** In middle school, you tend to have tests every 1-2 weeks across all subjects. Unlike in elementary school, you will have to memorize more material and more concepts in a shorter time frame, so be prepared to practice good study habits. Have a study schedule based on your needs and stay organized. Don't hesitate to ask for help. Reach out to your teachers and/or classmates to clarify concepts. Personally, I like to break up my studying session with short breaks where I do something I enjoy during that time. For history, I recommend looking at alternate sources such as YouTube videos to study as well as the main textbook. For math, I recommend having a friend who knows the concept better walk you through the steps of completing the practice problems.

Try to take small timed breaks throughout your study session. These breaks should be around five to ten minutes. By timing yourself, you won't lose track of time and continue with your studies. -ET

- **Do Your Homework:** Students I've met who struggle academically all have the same problem. None of them do their homework which drags their grade down. Even if you ace the tests, your homework grade can bring your average down. You should try your best to turn in your homework on time. If you cannot do so, turn it in late since any grade is better than a 0. If you miss an assignment or turn it in late, talk to the teacher and explain what happened.

If you are absent, make sure to communicate with your teachers through Schoology and catch up on any missing assignments. -ET

- **Don't Mess Around and Pay Attention:** Classes can be very monotonous at times, but it is important to pay as much attention as you can. The teachers are there to help teach you concepts and subjects that might come up in your high school career. If you mess around, you risk creating bad habits and not learning the material that will impact your future.

- **Peer Tutoring:** National Honors Society (NHS) provides individual or group tutoring on Monday Late Starts at 8:45-9:35 in the LRC. There is a form on the CDM Website: Counseling → Tutoring → NHS Peer Tutoring. You can fill out a form to be paired with a tutor if needed.

"I am terrible at being organized, but I managed to keep my A+ in every single class by checking Schoology to see assignments that are due. (You will develop a love-hate relationship with Schoology). I once delivered the final test of the year with my math teacher dressed in suits." -C.P

"When I get home, I have a quick snack and then do my homework. The sooner it's finished, the happier you'll feel. I know that you're busy with sports practice, but so am I, so I understand how you may not have enough time to do it as soon as possible. But if you want to, you can stay up late doing it, wake up early to do it, do it during lunch or break, or during another class period. Since I was on a block schedule, I always had two days to complete it. So if I couldn't do it the first day, I did it the second. Make sure to do the work that has the closest due date first and then complete the others. I try to study by studying a little bit a day for a week ahead and then studying a long time the night of the test. I got good grades all throughout middle school, so I say this method works. One way I help myself remember homework is by setting reminders when I find out that I have homework, like a reminder for tonight at 18:00 to do math homework."

-S.D

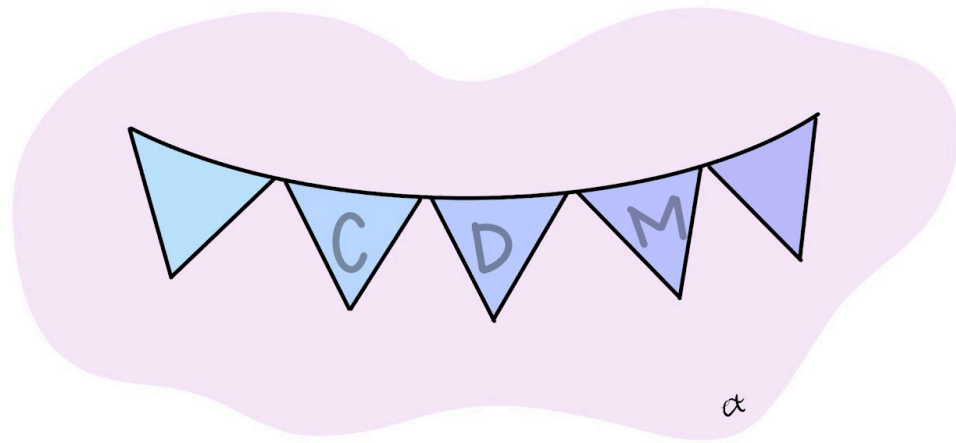


School Events

From rallies to sports games, school events have always been enjoyable for all middle school students. They have forged unforgettable memories and strengthened the bonds of friendship with my classmates. Hopefully, you will have a lot of fun in your next two years of school events while making memories with your friends.

- **Purchase An ASB Card:** One of the many perks of an ASB card is having free access to all middle school events. Instead of having to pay 15\$ for a sports game, you will be able to walk into any event by flashing your card. It's almost like a VIP card that also comes with a free yearbook and a bunch of coupons on the back.
- **Have Fun:** Many students make the mistake of not attending school events even if their schedule is free. Make sure to keep in mind that school parties and games are supposed to be fun and enjoyable, so ASB will put a lot of effort into making every event the best it can be. By not attending, you miss out on creating new memories and having a blast.
- **Visual and Performing Arts:** Many electives, such as dance, choir, band, orchestra, and drama, have various performances throughout the year. It is a fun way to support your friends. In my experience, the shows are always of excellent quality and showcase the hard work of the performers. -ET
- **Middle School Play:** Every year, all middle school students have an opportunity to participate in the middle school play. You don't need to be part of Drama to audition which will be held in January. -ET

"The football games were definitely the best events. I say go to Battle of the Bay because that's when the energy is the greatest and most fun. Go to the first one because it's like the first big event of the year, and everyone will be excited to go, and there will be many people. I made so many new friends by just talking to the people next to me. Definitely carpool with someone so you're not alone when you get there and find your friends together. Also, don't be afraid to dress up in the theme like neon night go and buy a shirt because everyone will be wearing it, and it's more fun." -S.D



Clubs

Clubs can be a great way to get more involved with the school and meet new people. Joining a club can give you more insights about our community and be a great experience in middle school. High schoolers host most clubs, but many allow middle schoolers to join. I encourage you to join a club that you find interesting.

- **Go to Club Rush:** Every year, CDM hosts their annual Club Rush, an event lasting a few days that helps showcase the various clubs on campus. Ranging from chess club to astronomy club, many clubs are on display with signup sheets. Club Rush allows students to learn more about the clubs offered at CDM.
- **Go to Club Meetings:** Once you've chosen a club you are interested in, it is very important to attend their weekly meetings. Attending these meetings shows interest in the club and can teach you new material about the subject of the club. In the future, attendance can influence leadership positions in high school.

"I joined the Astronomy club in 7th grade, and it was interesting to learn about the different concepts, so I recommend all incoming 7th graders to try out clubs they are interested in. You can always change clubs, and it's a great way to meet new people." -M.T.



Communication

A skill you will have to learn to make the most out of middle school is communicating with your teachers and peers. Email will be your best friend when it comes to contacting your teachers about missing assignments, tests, or homework help. Communication will help you clear up missing work with your teachers, and it can offer study help with your friends.

- **Use Schoology:** Schoology has a feature that allows you to contact any staff at CDM through their email system. This will allow you to send emails through Schoology to contact your teachers. When emailing your teacher, remember to identify yourself by stating your name and the period you are in with that teacher. Make sure you write in complete sentences, and give them time to answer you.
- **Clear Up Missing Work:** If you are ever absent, it is important to contact your teachers either in person or through email, asking to make up the missing assignments. If you fail to do so, your grade will drop, and the longer you wait, the harder it is to make it up.
- **Use Your Peers:** If you ever need help explaining a concept or studying, I recommend asking someone who knows the concept or someone who can help you study by texting them to help you. They might be able to explain it better since they went through the same learning process and can help you understand the subject.
- **Office Hours:** On most Mondays, since it is late start, your teachers will be in their classrooms before school begins. This is a good time to speak with them about any issues such as missing work, clarification on assignments, or any help needed.

"I always email my teacher about things like missing assignments, grades, or if I'm not going to be there. Also, go in person just in case, and I always set reminders for this to help me remember. If you need help with homework, check Schoology or whatever website you use and see if the teacher posted an answer key. You can also ask friends, post on your story asking for answers, look it up online, try to find videos of what you're working on, khan academy, ask the teacher during/after/before class, or just ask your parents. There is no shame in asking for and needing help."

-S.D



Lockers

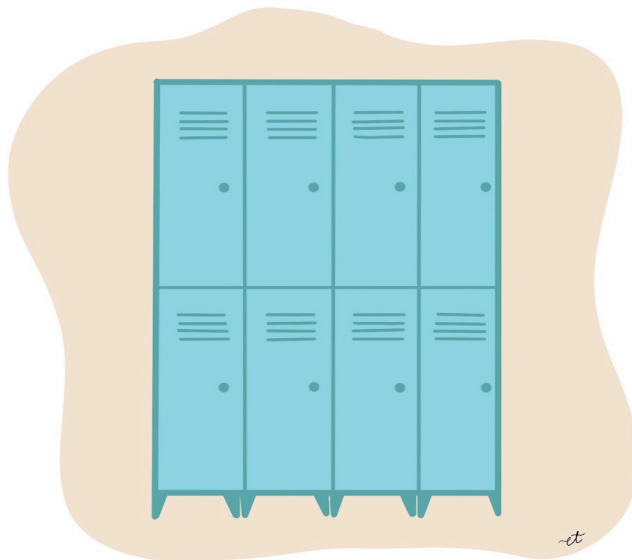
Unlike elementary school, you will be given two lockers, one for PE and one for daily usage. PE lockers are mainly for storing your PE uniform, located in the locker rooms.

I encourage you to use this space to keep the heavy weight off your back. -ET

- **PE Lockers:** During your first month of PE, you will be able to choose your locker. I recommend choosing a space near friends you are comfortable with. In the locker rooms, you change into your PE clothes. You may be nervous to change around others initially, but you will soon get used to it. Remember to bring your uniform home periodically to wash. You can purchase a combination lock for your locker at the beginning of the year. Once you receive your lock, make sure to practice opening and closing it at home.
- **Assigned Lockers:** These lockers and their combination number are assigned to you during registration. You can store your lunch, books, and school material in them, so you don't have to carry everything everywhere. If you can, before school, I would practice opening your locker

"During the first week of receiving my PE lock, I practiced constantly at home. At first, I could never get it to open, but now, it takes me five to ten seconds to bust my locker open."

-E.T.



Yondr

CDMMS has introduced a phone-free campus program, which started in 2024. The goal of this program is to promote student engagement.

- **Yondr pouch:** You will be given a Yondr pouch at registration. Before stepping on the school campus, you will be required to lock your phone in the provided Yondr pouch, and you will unlock it at the end of the day. The unlock stations are located at the middle school gates and the high school entrance.
- **Compliance:** Yondr check days will be announced throughout the year, and if you are in compliance, you will receive a raffle ticket and be eligible to win a gift card.

"Whenever my friends have an emergency where they need to contact their parents, they can go to the middle school office to unlock their phone to text or call them. Don't feel like you are completely restricted from using your phone." -E.T.



Electives

In addition to your core classes, you are now able to choose some of your classes, called electives. New electives can be added, so read the list and their description carefully. This is a fun way to try out new skills. I recommend choosing something you are interested in and not because all your friends will do it.

- **Electives with required applications:** Association of Student Body (ASB) and yearbook are the two electives you need to apply to. The applications usually open up sometime in April.
 - **ASB (Mr. Dobyns):** You will need to complete an application and send it to the ASB teacher. You will also need to provide a teacher recommendation letter.
 - **Yearbook (Mr. Brude):** You will need to email your completed application to the CDMMS yearbook teacher.
- **Electives with auditions:**
 - Look out for tryout information in the Spring
 - **Dance (Ms. Beckman):** There are several levels of Dance classes offered. If you like, you can attend the tryouts to be placed in a higher level.
 - **Color guard (Mr. Gilbert)**
 - **Cheer/Song (Ms. Muckenthaler)**
 - **Drumline (Mr. Gilbert)**
- **Changes in electives:** If you choose an elective at the start of school, and you realize you made a mistake and would like to switch to a different one, contact your counselor, and they will help you with this process. This will only be possible for the first couple of months, so if you want to switch out of the class late in the year, you will not be able to.



Wellness

Stress can occur to anyone during our time at school, and there are different ways where you can receive help. Make sure to reach out to someone when you are experiencing mental health issues.

- **King's Kove:** Located in rooms 228 and 229, this is a wellness space where you can unwind through fidgets, games, and sitting areas. There will be schedules for this space's open hours posted around campus. Our school social worker and counselors staff this space. If you would like to visit during class time, you must receive a pass from your teacher.
- **Wellness Wednesdays:** MS ASB hosts Wellness Wednesdays in the ASB room during lunch. Around campus, there will be posters showing when these will occur and what activities will be available.

"Before tests, I sometimes feel anxious about my performance and how well I studied. To reduce stress, I like to do a simple breathing exercise called box breathing. I breathe in for four seconds, hold for four, breathe out for four, and hold for four. I repeat this at least five times to feel centered. This increases my focus and decreases my anxiety level." -E.T.



"If You Fail, Try, Try Again."

–Maxwell Tran

"Be Brave, Be Kind, Be YOU!"

–Ella Tran