

# Welcome to Sunnyside Environmental School

## Middle School Beginning of the Year Info 2025

[Link to Climate Handbook for Sunnyside](#)

### **Statement of Understanding**

Parents and Guardians,

This packet is designed to share important information about Middle School at SES. **Please read it completely - we ask that all families, regardless of if this is your first year in our community or you've been here for many, take the time to review the various elements of Sunnyside's program and the importance of family involvement at our school.**

Sunnyside Environmental School (SES) is a K-8 community creating rich, place-based learning environments rooted in justice that empower students to become environmentally, socially, emotionally, racially, and academically literate, and who are collectively inspired to take action for a more just world.

Place-based education differs from traditional classroom-based education in that it is founded on the belief that **students' local community is one of the most important resources for learning**. Part of the student learning experience is spent beyond the walls of the actual school building. Natural spaces, local neighborhoods, museums, our own school yard and university campuses are just a few places where our students learn in place. These locations provide a canvas upon which elements of history, environmental education, scientific and biological relationships, culture, mathematics, economy, literature, and art are used to help children authentically make meaning of the world around them. The city's wild and urban areas become sites for inquiry, exploration and understanding as children are pushed to develop the academic and social-emotional skills that lead them to be critically conscious, curious members of the larger community.

In pursuit of this goal, students are involved in service learning efforts throughout their years at the school. In February, 8th graders participate in an overnight retreat; in the spring, all middle school students might participate in overnight marine biology trips or study marine biology at SES. At some point in the year, 6th graders participate in Oregon's Outdoor School program. Transportation will be provided for SES students when on field study.

**Family involvement is an essential component of SES.** Your signature indicates your understanding of our expectations for financial and time commitment. All families will be asked to volunteer time for field studies, overnights, and fundraising events outside normal school hours. Families will also be asked to help fundraise and contribute financially, as they are able. All program activities are paid for by the SES community, but will be open to all students regardless of families' ability to contribute time and or money.

## **Service Learning**

Our students engage in service learning in our school building through class projects such as litter pickup after lunch, helping out in the cafeteria to serve food to all grades, and making sack lunches for our unhoused neighbors that are delivered twice a week. We also complete service learning projects at various sites on our weekly field studies with partner organizations, such as beach cleanups in Seaside with Surfrider and native plantings with Friends of Mt. Tabor and more!

Students may have the opportunity later in the year to track service learning hours as part of their tracking sheets, which are required for students to participate in certain activities, like attending marine biology trips and other class travel, dances, and (for 8th grade only) enjoying off-campus lunch later in the year.

## **Weekly Field Studies**

One of the unique aspects of the Sunnyside Environmental School middle school curriculum is the opportunity for students to participate in field studies and optional overnight trips. These place-based learning experiences are an integral part of the SES middle school curriculum.

These days and overnight trips are essential for middle school students learning at Sunnyside. We highly encourage 100% student participation and work closely with families to ensure that every student attends field studies and overnights. Middle school classes travel on field studies on Thursdays weekly in the fall and spring, and then once a month in the winter months. Adult support for these trips are essential. We need chaperones in order to make them happen, and you will receive a link to an online signup so that you can join!

## **Field Study Financial Info**

In 2024-25, our middle school traveled to more than 70 unique locations, investing a total of \$28,000 to provide our students with these fantastic opportunities. Fortunately, \$11,000 was covered by grants. (These figures do not include the 3x marine biology overnights, or 6th grade Outdoor School.) Some trips are entirely free because classes walk to outdoor spaces. Other trips require bus rides and admission fees. All trips are essential to bringing our place-based, thematic core curriculum to life, and wouldn't be possible without your generous support!



<< To kick off the year, **we ask all families to contribute between \$75-\$150 sliding scale to contribute to weekly field study costs, including bus fare, and classroom supplies** like pencils & notebooks. Please contribute at: [bit.ly/SES-MS-SUPPLIES](https://bit.ly/SES-MS-SUPPLIES) OR scan the QR code.



## Overnight Trips

SES overnight marine biology trips (May), and the 8th Grade Retreat (February) are optional. There are behavior expectations that must be met for students to attend. Students MUST be Meeting ("M") on the Tracking Sheet. If they receive an Not Meeting ("N") or Close To Meeting ("CM"), students must meet with the relevant staff member to set goals for improvement, and schedule check-in meetings to monitor progress. During any of the overnight school trips, there are students who do not travel for various reasons and stay at SES to continue academic programming at school. We understand that sometimes certain students and families decide not to attend the overnights, and we do require that students who wish to travel meet expectations via the tracking sheet in order to attend.

### Marine Biology Week 2026

#### **6th Grade**

##### **Newport, OR**

*Tidepools! Yurts! Squids!*

May 12-14, 2026

3 days, 2 nights

\*Per student: ~\$425

#### **7th Grade**

##### **Olympic Nat'l Park, WA**

*Hiking! Canoeing!*

May 11-15, 2026

5 days, 4 nights

\*Per student: ~\$750

#### **8th Grade**

##### **Catalina Island, CA**

*Snorkeling! Kayaking!*

May 11-15, 2026

5 days, 4 nights

\*Per student: ~\$1,250

### 8th Grade Retreat 2026

#### **8th Grade**

##### **Camp Collins | Gresham, OR**

*Community Building! Portfolio Kick Off!*

February 26-27, 2026

2 days, 1 night

\*Per student: ~\$275

**\* PLEASE NOTE:** The costs shown here are 24-25 cost data, and may change for 25-26. We will communicate with families ASAP with much more information about Marine Bio, including how to set up recurring monthly payments.

**TRACKING DEADLINE:** Students must have all "Ms" on Tracking sheet 2 weeks prior to marine biology overnight trips (April 24, 2026) and must continue to Meet in all areas continuing past that point in order to travel.

**CHAPERONES:** We cannot take these trips without parent chaperones. Sign ups and much more information about these trips and chaperone needs will be available later in the year. (**Note:** 6th and 7th grade Chaperones attend at no cost. 8th grade Catalina Chaperones pay the same cost as students, given airfare, shuttle, and ferry transportation to the island.)

**LATE ENROLLMENT:** If a student enrolls after March 11, 2026 (2 months prior to travel), we will offer them a rich curriculum at SES in lieu of the overnight trip.

## **Fundraising**

As you may expect, this comes with a sizable financial expense for our school. Our philosophy is “no one goes unless everyone goes.” We expect that all students will participate in all trips, and also expect that the school and parent community will make sure that every student is able to attend each trip by contributing as much as they are able, helping to chaperone, and when possible, supporting our various fundraising efforts year-round.

### **How do we fund these trips?**

1. Direct Contributions from Families (one-time or recurring)
2. SES GO Fund Scholarships (available by request, see below)

### **Student-Led Fundraising**

All middle school students are expected to participate in AT LEAST one fundraising activity throughout the year. This may include working their core class’s carnival booth during Harvest Fair, helping with various bake sales or babysitting nights, plant & t-shirt sales, and numerous other events. Student ideas about fundraisers are ALWAYS welcome, and it takes parent support to help make them happen.

### **PTSA Fundraising Go Fund**

Our PTSA’s robust calendar of events allows them to generously contribute towards the cost of overnights. These include Walk Run Move, Harvest Fair, Winter Craft Festival, 6-8 Musical and K-5 Musicals, Read-A-Thon, Auction & Gala, and so much more. Please join in the fun and support our community events as you are able by volunteering and attending.

### **Grants**

Do you write grants? We are always looking for help identifying and applying to various grants or other funding partnerships. Please contact Tara ([tbranham@pps.net](mailto:tbranham@pps.net)) if you can help!

**Adult support is integral to successful fundraising** to keep these marine biology experiences happening year after year. To be honest, its sustainability is fragile unless we continue to come together on fundraising. How might you help? Please contact Steph Barnhart ([sbarnhart@pps.net](mailto:sbarnhart@pps.net)) or Tara Branham ([tbranham@pps.net](mailto:tbranham@pps.net)) with questions or ideas.

## **SES Go Fund - Scholarships for Overnight Costs**



We know many families cannot contribute financially. That’s why we have the SES Go Fund. Families in need of partial or full assistance are invited to apply for assistance from the Go Fund **by December 1, 2025**. While we do not require any sort of financial disclosure to access this scholarship fund, we respectfully ask families to complete a Go Fund Request as soon as you’re able so we can effectively budget. Visit [bit.ly/GOFundRequestForm](https://bit.ly/GOFundRequestForm) OR scan the QR code to request support.

# Welcome!



Hi there! I'm your friendly school librarian Gillian! I'm so excited to help all the kids find great fit books. My Library Therapy Dog Winnie is so happy the kids are back! We missed everyone!

## About Library



Students K-5 come to the library each week for checkout and a lesson related to library, literacy and/or technology skills. It's WAY more than the Dewey Decimal System! We learn how to search for books, how to spot fake news, how to evaluate illustrations, how to use technology safely and much much more! I can't wait to dive in with all the classes!

Middle School Students can check out daily between 10:55-11:05 and at lunch, there is also a sign up for eating lunch in the library daily!

## Contact



Feel free to email me anytime at [ggrimm@pps.net](mailto:ggrimm@pps.net). You can (and should!) visit our library website for information about book suggestions, research resources, audiobooks, library fun and more! (OBOB sign ups coming soon!) [tiny.cc/SESLibrary](http://tiny.cc/SESLibrary)

## How many books?

Each grade has different book limits. For all grades we keep to a one-in-a-series policy

Kindergarten: One Book

1st-2nd graders: Two Books

3rd graders: Three Books

4th graders: Four Books

5th graders: Five Books

Middle School: No limit, just be responsible

## Come Say Hi!



## Welcome to Physical Education with Coach John 2025-2026

The gymnasium will be a place of teamwork, encouragement, and practice with movements—a place to try it out. “Nice Try!” is a phrase that will guide our time in the gymnasium this year. We will *try* skills, games, and movements that will be new and different. You will always be met with a chorus of encouragement when you walk through the door.

### **A few PE nuts and bolts:**

#### Athletic shoes are **required**:

- Students are **required** to wear athletic shoes that lace or velcro securely. These shoes must be dry, clean and supportive of athletic movements. This requirement is a *safety* concern meant to lessen the likelihood of injuries and enhance the ability for students to participate fully.
- Please practice tying shoelaces with younger students!
- Consider sending an extra pair of athletic shoes that are kept in student’s lockers.

#### Schedule:

- Students K-5th grade have PE twice a week all school year.
- Middle school students have PE 5 days per week for one quarter per school year.

#### Guidelines and Grades:

- Each Physical Education lesson aligns with [the State of Oregon physical education standards](#). Students will be learning a variety of physical and social skills.
- The primary standard students will be graded on is: *“The student participates in physical activity while demonstrating personal and social responsibility.”*
- Active participation is extremely important in order to achieve positive health outcomes. Please let me know if your learner is unable to participate due to health or medical reasons.
- The PE guidelines and expectations for student behavior and participation are:  
“Safety + Honesty + Respect = Trust” During PE class students will practice building this trust over and over again.

Can’t wait to see you all soon!  
John Mayer



Sunnyside Environmental School PTSA  
3421 SE Salmon Street  
Portland, Oregon 97214  
www.sesptsa.org  
**501c3 Tax ID: 93-1208359**

August 26, 2025

Dear Sunnyside Community:

We are thrilled to welcome you back to another great year at SES. We are your 2025-2026 PTSA Co-Presidents, Maia Hixon (Luka, 2nd) and Valerie Kahn (Isaac, 4th, and Colin, 2nd). We hardly do this alone: a stellar board, along with dozens of parents who fulfill special roles & coordinate events, 5th and 8th grade student reps, and teacher reps make up the SES Parent Teacher Student Association. **Our main purpose is to build community and raise funds in support of SES' mission.**

Our society is set up to leave public education woefully underfunded. One of the things that makes our school unparalleled is the way we engage ALL of our students in the world around them. Sometimes that happens with their hands in the dirt around the garden grounds. Sometimes that happens through field studies off campus, near and far. Without our **Back to School Ask** (see pg. 2), plus money raised at PTSA events throughout the year like Read-A-Thon and our Spring Gala, we simply could not maintain our unique and beloved **field study, music, and garden programs**.

If you are able to give **financially** to support this work, there are many opportunities to do so throughout the year - to start, you are going to get additional asks for contributions from the SES office and your child's teacher soon, if you haven't already. If you are able to give **time**, we need that just as much as money. Whether you chaperone one middle school field study, serve as a Class Family Rep, or volunteer at lunch or a special event, it takes many, many hands to make Sunnyside what it is. And, really, it is these joyful happenings that make us the vibrant community we are. **Parent involvement is critical in keeping SES traditions going strong.**

Please join Konstella, our digital communication, event calendar, and volunteer sign-up app. We encourage you to **join us on the playground Friday, September 5, at the PTSA Community Social**, where you can learn about all the events, groups, and committees you or your child can participate in. Or **come to our first PTSA morning meeting of the year on Friday, September 12 at 8:45 am** (in person or online). Not sure how to get involved or have a new idea? Please reach out! You can contact us at: [board@sesptsa.org](mailto:board@sesptsa.org).

Please, take action RIGHT NOW to support our school and make 2025-26 the best SES year yet:

1. Contribute to the **Back To School Ask: [BIT.LY/SESPTSA-ASK25](https://bit.ly/sesptsa-ask25)**
2. Log in or sign up to stay connected to SES PTSA on **Konstella: [BIT.LY/SES-KONSTELLA](https://bit.ly/ses-konstella)**

With true gratitude,

Maia Hixon  
SES PTSA Co-President  
[caspimaia@hotmail.com](mailto:caspimaia@hotmail.com)

Valerie Kahn  
SES PTSA Co-President  
[vdutton@gmail.com](mailto:vdutton@gmail.com)



## PTSA BACK TO SCHOOL ASK: 2025-2026

Each year, the PTSA asks parents to contribute what they can to support Sunnyside's unique programs that are not funded by PPS, but are a big part of what makes Sunnyside special: Field Study, Music, and Garden & Sustainability programs. **Funds raised through this Ask make up a critical piece of our overall budget.** (Note: The amount requested here is separate from the school's grade-specific request for school supplies and expenses like bus rentals for field trips. Give to all as you are able!)

### How Much Should I Give?

We ask that each family give **\$250 per student**. We understand that this is not possible for all and offer payment levels to fit every budget:

- **\$350 PLUS Level:** Fully supports these programs for all SES students, plus a little extra to cover others that cannot afford to donate.
- **\$250 Standard Level:** Fully supports these programs for all SES students.
- **\$150 Reduced Level:** For those that would like to support the programs, but cannot pay the standard amount.
- You may also give *any* amount. Visit **BIT.LY/SESPTSA-ASK25** or scan the QR code below.

### Does giving now cover all my student's costs for the year?

Unfortunately, no. Funds donated to the Back To School Ask help support the programming outlined below. The SES office, teachers, and Class Family Reps will provide information throughout the year about grade-specific needs, especially including marine biology trips for middle schoolers.

### Is this a tax deductible donation?

YES! SES PTSA is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

### Where does this money go?

#### 1. **SES Field Study Program**

Not all learning happens in a classroom. Field studies get students out into the neighborhood and the broader community, and get middle schoolers on overnight trips where they all engage in in-depth hands-on learning experiences. Money you contribute to the Back to School Ask will help ensure that **all** students are able to attend all field studies offered for their grade, regardless of their family's ability to pay.

#### 2. **SES Arts & Music Program**

Back to School Ask money will pay for visiting musicians & performing arts instructors, so that our students can experience an education rich in the arts.

#### 3. **SES Garden & Sustainability Program**

Every SES student receives hands-on instruction in gardening, sustainability, and the natural world from our wonderful garden teacher, who is paid in part by funds donated through the Back to School Ask.



< SCAN QR CODE OR GIVE AT :

**BIT.LY/SESPTSA-ASK25**

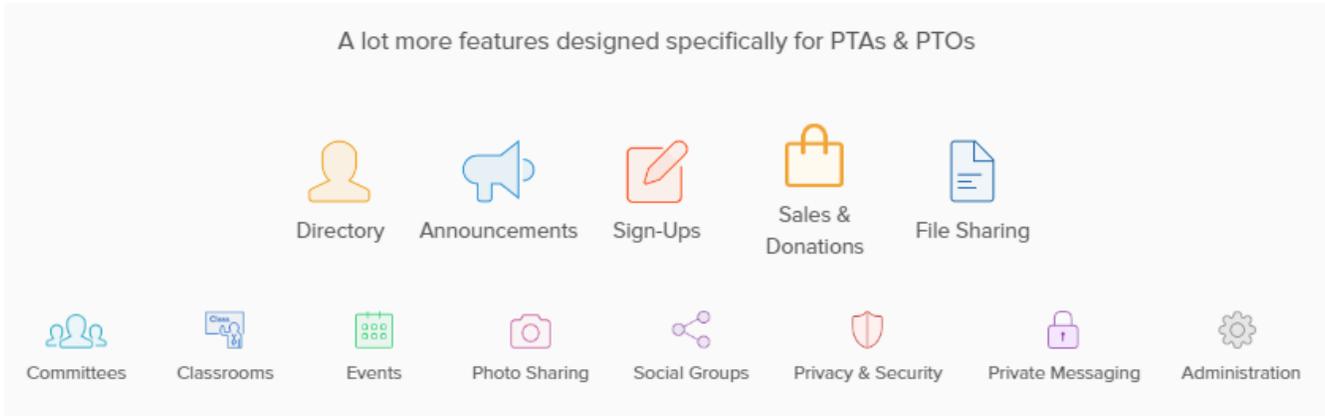
Pay by Check: "SES PTSA" Mail to: 3412 SE Salmon Street, Portland, OR 97214 or drop off in the SES Office.



# KONSTELLA: ONE PLACE. ALL THE INFO.

Gone are the days of confusion about where to go for Sunnyside information. The answer: **KONSTELLA**. This tool is the one-stop-shop for event information, parent directory, interest groups, volunteer sign ups, fundraising links, and more.

## What is Konstella?



### It's a website and app for all of these important things:

1. Messaging Other Parents
2. Event Information & Calendar
3. School Directory
4. Parent Social Groups
5. Volunteer Sign Ups
6. Fundraising Links

### Existing Interest Groups include:

- Advocacy
- Families New To Sunnyside
- Outdoors & Hiking
- Parents & Caregivers of Neuro-Divergent Students
- Family Biking & Bike Bus
- Carpool Connection

## Can I make a new sign up or start a new parent group?

We ask that all sign ups and parent groups are first approved by PTSA, but we welcome your ideas! Please email: [board@sesptsa.org](mailto:board@sesptsa.org) to start the conversation.



< SCAN QR CODE OR SIGN UP AT :

**BIT.LY/SES-KONSTELLA**

Use this link on DESKTOP to access via webpage. Use this link on MOBILE to access via app.



## YOUR GUIDE TO SES COMMUNICATIONS.

We know - there are a lot of places to visit for SES information. This happens because the information comes from many different sources - the PTSA, PPS, and the SES front office. Explore the options to find what works best for you and don't hesitate to reach out if you need help with any of these tools.

**Sunnyside's PPS Site:** [pps.net/sunnyside](https://pps.net/sunnyside)

Sunnyside staff members keep this site up to date with official PPS and SES announcements. There is also a link to the school calendar there: [pps.net/Page/416](https://pps.net/Page/416). This calendar has both PPS and SES-specific dates, so please check it out!

**Sunnyside's Weekly Newsletter, "The Messenger"**

You will receive a weekly communication directly from Sunnyside's admin team via the ParentSquare app. This will be sent each Friday, and will contain dates to know about and important school news. ParentSquare will also occasionally send you critical announcements and day-of reminders. For questions about ParentSquare, email Sunnyside's front office ([jethomas@pps.net](mailto:jethomas@pps.net) or [mschaeffe@pps.net](mailto:mschaeffe@pps.net)).

**Classroom Family Representatives ("CFRs")**

You'll learn who your classroom family representative is early in the year. CFRs work closely with teachers to help keep you informed about classroom-specific activities and needs. CFRs typically communicate via Konstella. To volunteer for this position (it's easy, fun, and can often be done remotely outside of school hours!), contact Ashley Ashworth ([raethel@gmail.com](mailto:raethel@gmail.com)).

**Konstella:** [bit.ly/SES-KONSTELLA](https://bit.ly/SES-KONSTELLA)

Your one-stop-shop for all PTSA info, classroom and school parent directory, and private messaging! Please read more about Konstella on page 2 of this packet!

**Sunnyside's PTSA Website:** [sesptsa.org](https://sesptsa.org)

The PTSA manages this page, which lists upcoming fundraisers and provides other public-facing information about the SES PTSA, which is a 501c3 nonprofit.

**@SES\_PTSA on Instagram:** [instagram.com/ses\\_ptsa](https://www.instagram.com/ses_ptsa)

Event reminders plus beautiful images of what's going on around school. Maintained by the PTSA. Give them a follow and tag @ses\_ptsa in your own posts!

**Sunnyside PTSA Facebook page:** [facebook.com/SESPTSA](https://facebook.com/SESPTSA)

Anyone can see SES PTSA announcements here and Facebook users can follow the page.

**Sunnyside Community Forum:** [facebook.com/groups/164022456969227](https://facebook.com/groups/164022456969227)

Facebook users can discuss events related to the school and our community.



## REDUCE WASTE AT SES.

Help us waste less this year at Sunnyside! From small changes to your daily commute to school, to special initiatives and projects, we are re-focusing our efforts to reduce, re-use, and recycle. Here are just a few of the ways SES is curbing overconsumption and waste! If you have more ideas about environmental sustainability at SES, please contact us: [board@sesptsa.org](mailto:board@sesptsa.org).

### **Classroom Snacks**

Avoid waste from individually wrapped snacks! **Some great snack ideas with less wrapping include:** Fruit (cuties, apples); large party-sized bags of pretzels or veggie stix; homemade items sent in containers from home; package-free pre-cut cheese, giant boxes of goldfish, etc.

### **Blue Bottle Bags for SES**

Did you know you can earn money for SES by cashing in your cans and bottles? Pick up a blue bag and special SES tags from the office for at-home can collection. Deliver your bagged cans to any Oregon Bottle Drop location and that's it! \$0.10/can for our school!

### **Lost & Found**

Help us keep our Lost & Found manageable by LABELING all of your child's items and checking the Lost & Found regularly. When items are left behind, we upcycle and donate everything to the PPS Clothing Center.

### **No Idling at Drop-Off & Pick-Up**

Please help keep our air clean on campus! Turn OFF your engine when stopping for Drop Off / Pick Up around school grounds. Another great way to curb emissions is to go to one of our Bike Bus meet up spots every Wednesday and get to school the people-powered way!

# The Easiest and Safest Way to Pay for School-Related Fees

## REGISTRATION

### IS FREE & EASY!

-  1 Go to [schoolpay.com](https://schoolpay.com) or download the SchoolPay Payment Center app.
-  2 Find or Create your account.
-  3 Login or open your app and pay electronically with your credit/debit card or electronic check.



View every payment item relevant to all of your children



Monitor meal purchases and replenish account balances



Make payments anywhere, at anytime, and on any device

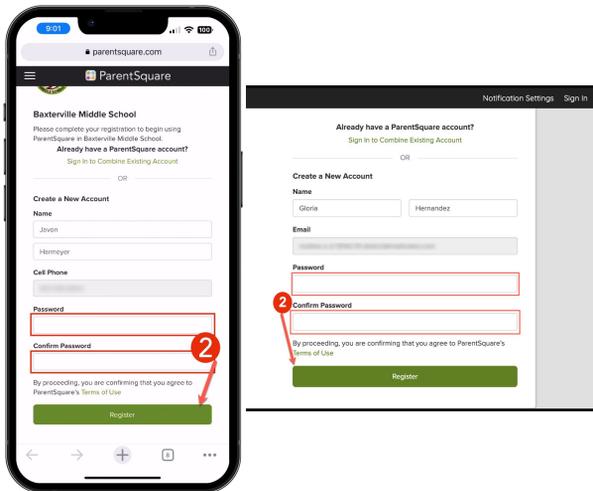
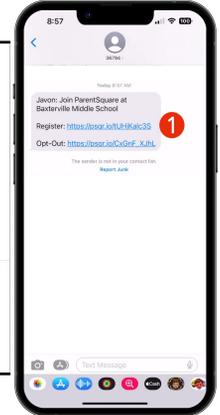
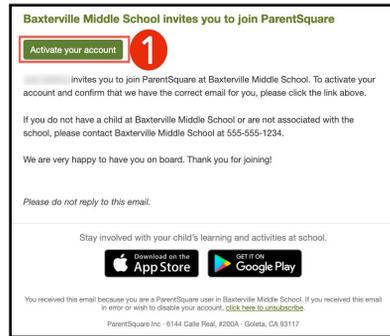


View every payment with detailed reporting tools



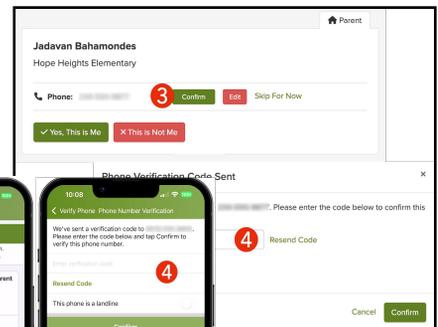
# Parents & Guardians Getting Started Guide

1. Open the invitation email or text. Click **Activate your account** or tap the link to activate your account.

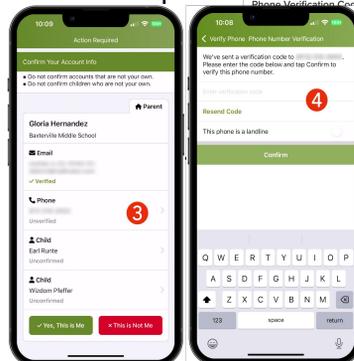


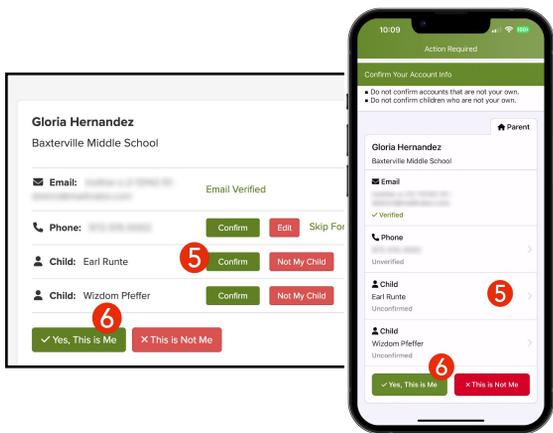
2. Create a Password for your ParentSquare account and click **Register**.

3. Click **Confirm** for your phone number and/or email. A verification code will be sent to the email or phone number.



4. Enter the verification code to confirm.





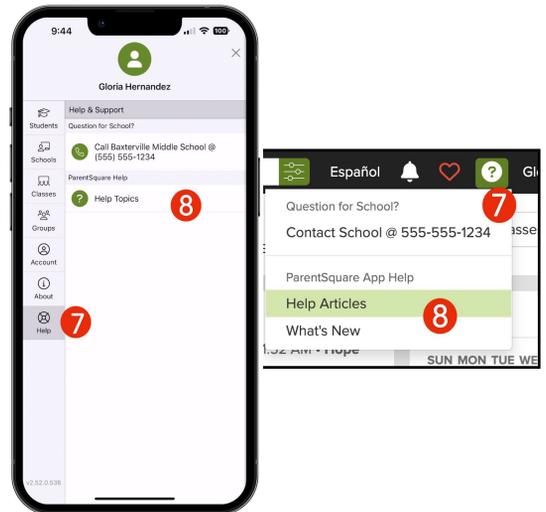
5. Confirm your child(ren) by clicking **Confirm**. Use **Not My Child** if a child listed is not associated with your account.
6. Select **Yes, This is Me** when you have confirmed your contact information and child(ren) associated with your account.

*Name misspelled?  
Wrong email or phone number?  
Missing a child on your account?*

**Contact your child's school to get this information updated.**

Once you are logged in to ParentSquare, you will be able to access self-paced training modules, video resources and help articles to assist you with using ParentSquare.

7. Click **?** (Help) for help or your school contact information.
8. Select **Help Articles** to learn how to use ParentSquare.



**The ParentSquare apps are free and available in both the Apple iOS and Android stores.**

