



ISLANDER MIDDLE SCHOOL

7447 84th Avenue SE | Mercer Island, WA 98040

www.mercerislandschools.org

T: 206-236-3413 F: 206-236-3408

Mary Jo Budzius
Principal

maryjo.budzius@mercerislandschools.org

Becky Mullvain
Associate Principal

becky.mullvain@mercerislandschools.org

Katie Gallagher
Associate Principal

katie.gallagher@mercerislandschools.org

Dear 5th Grade Families,

Believe it or not, 2026 is the year your 5th grader goes to middle school! 😊 The transition process for students and parents begins this February and runs through the first day of the 2026/2027 school year on August 26, 2026. In anticipation of how quickly spring will be upon us, we want to ask you to please **SAVE the DATES** for all the following important 5th to 6th transition activities. We have indicated which events are for **families**, for **parents/guardians** or are specifically for **students**.

5th Grade Registration Information (Google Form to be sent to all 5th grade families):

Registration information will be sent via a Google Form to 5th grade families on **February 23rd**. Families will need to complete the online registration process by **March 23rd**.

Special Services Webinar (for parents only):

Join us for a Special Services Webinar on **February 26th from 5:45-6:45** to learn more about Islander Middle School's support model for Special Education, 504 Plans, and English Language Development (ELD). During this session, families will hear directly from IMS staff, counselors, teachers, and administrators about how we support students academically, socially, and emotionally.

There will be time to ask questions, better understand our systems and services, and connect with the people who work closely with students every day. We hope you'll join us for this informative and collaborative conversation.

Gator for a Night . . . Incoming 6th Grade Family Night (for parents and incoming 6th graders):

This event is on **Wednesday, March 18th at IMS**.

The goal of this evening is for incoming 5th graders to get excited as they become familiar with the IMS campus and all the fun opportunities that will be available to them in the 26/27 school year. We want each student to start seeing themselves as an IMS Gator. Students will visit several different locations throughout the IMS Campus (Scavenger Hunt Style). At each location they will have an "experience" to see, hear, participate in, read about or try out. This informal event is completely student driven, with no formal presentation.

Counselors will be available during this event to answer questions families may have about the registration process. There will also be a space to connect informally with PTSA representatives to check-in around any questions you may have as a new middle school parent.

This drop-in event will be open from 4:30 - 6:00 pm and we anticipate the experience to last about 40 total minutes. There will be no formal presentation on this night. Please plan to wear very comfortable shoes as you will walk a ton!

Incoming 6th Grade Parent Information Night (for parents only):

This event is scheduled for **Wednesday, May 6th 6:00 - 8:00 pm**. The purpose of this night is to give **parents** a sense of the middle school experience. There will be an opening presentation by admin

giving general information about the transition to middle school, expectations, schedules, Gator Time, and much more. Parent will then have the opportunity to choose between several informational learning opportunities such as:

→ **Student Panel**

The student panel session is designed to give parents "expert" insight into the experience of being a 6th grader at IMS. A selection of 6th graders will be asked questions about 6th grade life, giving them the opportunity to share about their experiences regarding the transition to middle school, technology, academic load, lunchtime, friendships and more. Hopefully parents will leave this session feeling excited about their student's impending transition to middle school, and confident in the knowledge that our incoming students will be supported in ways that impact the whole child positively and set them up for success at IMS.

→ **"In the Middle" Student Success**

Our Purpose: To equip families with insight into how students can thrive during their transition to middle school. Take a glimpse at a 'Day in the Life of a 6th Grader' and explore the engagement continuum. Learn about the executive functioning skills that lead to success in middle school.

→ **Supporting Responsible Tech Use In Class and At Home**

Explore strategies to develop healthy habits around tech use in class and at home. Learn about the safety controls that our district tech team utilizes and how you can leverage these tools at home as well.

→ **Instructional Tech and Parent Access**

Discover the essential online tools and platforms (like Schoology and Qmlativ) your student will be using every day, and learn how to access your parent/guardian accounts so you can stay connected to their learning and progress.

→ **Skills for Staying Mentally Healthy and Parenting Support for Middle Schoolers**

We will share protective factors, developmental tasks and keys to parenting adolescents. We will also review methods for developing resilience in teens and share samples of our IMS health classes.

→ **PTSA and Middle School Engagement**

Join our PTSA session to learn how to get involved and support our middle school students! We'll share information such as: Ways to get involved/PTA Overview, Gator Treats/Room Parents, After School Activities - confirm there will be an activity bus next year, Schoology/homework management from a parent's perspective, Counselor Support, Fundraising, Lunch Buddies, Q&A

5th Grade Classroom Visits from WEB Leaders (for incoming 6th grade students only):

These visits will take place in late-Spring. IMS 8th grade WEB Leaders will meet with 5th grade classrooms to share information about IMS and answer student questions.

IMS "Back2School" Day (for incoming 6th grade students and parents):

This event will take place **TBD**. IMS Back2School is the day all students and parents come to IMS in order to take school photos, sign-up for PTSA volunteer opportunities, and walk the student class schedule. 6th graders will also receive their iPad.

IMS Open for informal visits (for incoming 6th grade students and parents):

On August 24th IMS will be open to students and families. Students can walk their schedule and get comfortable with their new surroundings. This will not be an opportunity to pick up technology, if you are unable to make Back2School Day, iPads will be distributed on the first day of school.

6th Grade WEB Experience (for incoming 6th grade students only):

Wednesday, August 26, 2026 is the first day of school. IMS runs on a special schedule that day where only 6th grade students and their 8th grade WEB Leaders attend school at the beginning of the morning. The new 6th graders will have a welcome assembly and then will break into small groups where there will be team building experiences for students, followed by tours and lunch. 7th and 8th Graders arrive at school later in the morning. All 6th, 7th and 8th graders will then run through a shortened schedule of their 6 classes beginning at 11:20 am and ending at 1:20pm.

We will send many reminders as we get closer to the dates for each event, but we wanted to be sure families are aware of the myriad of transition activities and that the dates get a priority spot on your busy calendars.

Sincerely,

Becky Mullvain, Katie Gallagher and Mary Jo Budzius
IMS Administration