



Middlesex Middle School

STUDENT & FAMILY HANDBOOK 2026 - 2027

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MIDDLESEX MIDDLE SCHOOL

204 Hollow Tree Ridge Road
Darien, CT 06820
203-655-2518

MMS OPEN HOUSE 2026

September 14, 2026 - Grade 6
September 15, 2026 - Grade 7
September 16, 2026 - Grade 8
6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

INTRODUCTION

This handbook represents the school's efforts to help develop a mutual understanding and working partnership with Middlesex Middle School students and their parents. In it, you will find general information, rules, and procedures that have been developed to assist in the daily routines that are a part of our school. You will also find Board of Education Policies regarding important issues.

For those of you who are new to Middlesex Middle School, this handbook will be an important reference as you become oriented to our school. To search for information in the handbook:

1. View the [Table of Contents](#).
2. Select "View Document Outline" under the View menu in Google Docs.
3. Use the Find feature in your internet browser, which is typically a menu option or found by clicking CTRL + F.

This handbook is updated on an annual basis and subject to revision.

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Check the [website](#) for the listing of faculty and staff email addresses.

Principal	Mrs. Kate Dimoulas	Ext. 3226
Assistant Principal	Dr. Felicia Bellows (gr. 6)	Ext. 3371
Assistant Principal	Dr. Caitlin O'Keefe (gr. 7)	Ext. 3221
Assistant Principal	Mr. Tim Monahan (gr. 8)	Ext. 3298
Program Director for Special Education (6-8)	Mrs. Sarah Ramaley	Ext. 3281
Principals' Secretary	Allison Ball	Ext. 3299
Main Office Secretary	Margaret Lane	Ext. 3001
Attendance Secretary	Donna Coppola	Ext. 3321
Special Education & Student Services Secretary	Sue Farmer	Ext. 3363
School Resource Officer	Kevan Taggart	Ext. 3457
Director of School Health Services	Emily Merritt	Ext. 2304
School Nurses	Val Maroney	Ext. 3238
	Diane Ryan	Ext. 3238
DPS Director of Mental Health	Dr. Alycia Dadd	Ext. 7442
Director of Counseling Grades 6-12	Cathy Ostar	Ext. 2498
Counseling Secretary & Registrar	Sue Loura	Ext. 3308
School Counselors	Casey Westcott (gr. 6)	Ext. 3675
	Jackie Petrasanta (gr. 6)	Ext. 3365
	Greg Carnevali (gr. 7)	Ext. 3258
	Dani Jenkins (gr. 7)	Ext. 3262
	Emily Berezecky (gr. 8)	Ext. 3364
	Sam Vanleeuwen (gr. 8)	Ext. 3219
School Psychologists	Katie Petruzzelli (gr. 6)	Ext. 3323
	Monique Ross (gr. 7)	Ext. 3333
	Patricia O'Meara (gr. 8)	Ext. 3255
School Social Worker	Anna Jacobson	Ext. 3218
Teen Talk Counselor	TBA	Ext. 3616
English Dept. Chairperson (6-12)	Kristin Colonies	Ext. 3469
History/Social Studies Dept. Chairperson (6-12)	Dennis Cabrera	Ext. 2338
Mathematics Dept. Chairperson (6-12)	Roni Rodier	Ext. 2331
Director of Music and Visual Arts (K-12)	Colleen Thompson	Ext. 7419
Science Dept. Chairperson (6-12)	Christian Dockum	Ext. 2349
World Language Dept. Coordinator (K-12)	Scott Webster	Ext. 2332

Parents are encouraged to initiate calls to teachers and counselors. Please direct questions first to the classroom teacher, who is best able to provide an informed response about a student's progress in a course; if your concerns are not addressed, please then contact the department chair or building administrator. (See also: [Darien Public Schools Chain of Communication](#)).

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DARIEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS VISION OF THE GRADUATE

In March of 2020, the Darien Public Schools assembled a coalition of stakeholders—students, parents, teachers, administrators, community leaders, and Board of Education members—with the purpose of defining a Vision of the Graduate, a statement of what it means to our community to prepare students from prekindergarten through high school graduation for a successful future. Two aspirations emerged from community input: That all students would have the confidence and capacity to be self-directed, independent adults who live purposeful, happy, fulfilling lives, and that they would become citizens who contribute collaboratively and innovatively to their local and global communities.

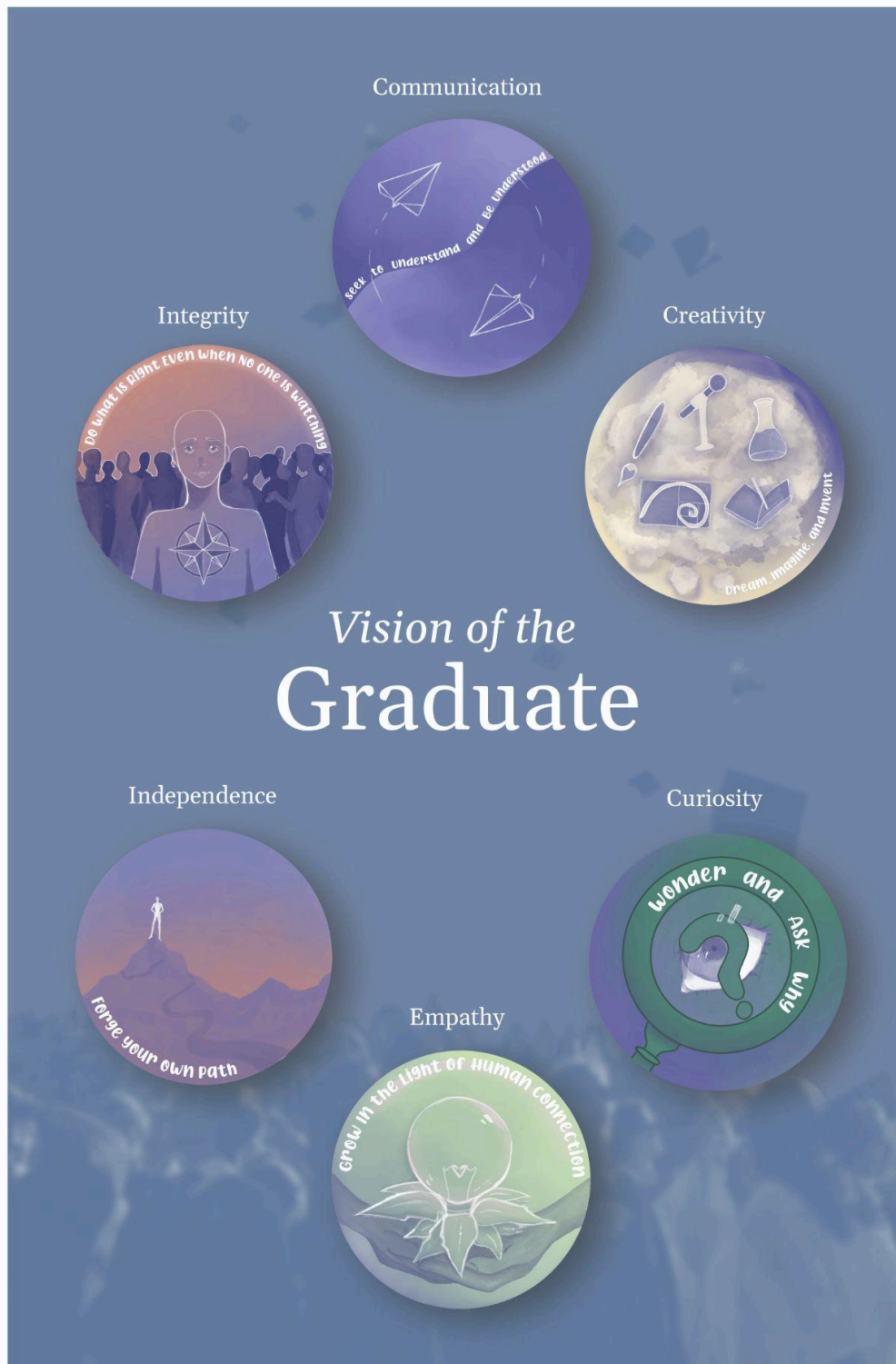
In an era of rapid change to education and to the workforce, the Darien Public Schools recognized the need to identify through this Vision the skills and dispositions required to raise compassionate, resilient problem-solvers and leaders: Communication, Creativity, Curiosity, Empathy, Independence, and Integrity.

The Darien Public Schools is committed to giving all of our students multiple opportunities to master these competencies and to acquire these dispositions, throughout their experiences in our schools and their engagement with our curriculum, from kindergarten through to graduation. As a result, 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.

Darien Public Schools Vision of the Graduate

Communication	Creativity	Curiosity	Empathy	Independence	Integrity
Effective collaboration will depend on your ability to listen with a discerning ear and express your ideas with clarity and passion. Communication is a two-way exchange. Listen before you speak. Hear what is behind the words. Craft your communication with purpose and choose your words carefully - they hold great power. Know that your actions also tell your story. Find your own voice and dare to use it to build your community and change your world. <i>Seek to understand and be understood</i>	Pursuing new ideas will inspire you and others. Connect all that you have learned in order to generate novel thinking, design solutions, and innovate. Embrace the trial and error process. See mistakes as opportunities. Problems are solved by thinking about what can be rather than what has been. Seek and appreciate the beauty within each discipline. Believe in your vision and give form to your ideas. <i>Dream, imagine, and invent</i>	Approaching the world with childlike amazement will lead you to new questions and inspire learning for life. Pursue knowledge as it provides the bedrock for thinking. Turn your mind to inquiry while pursuing your passions. Engage with others' thinking and question with persistence to deepen your understanding. Commit to fearless exploration of the unknown because it will open doors to new possibilities. <i>Wonder and ask why</i>	Understanding other people's experiences will enable you to form meaningful relationships and empower you. Open your heart and mind to the ideas and feelings of others and, as a result, learn more about yourself. Radiate kindness. Act with compassion. Embrace diversity and stand up for others and for inclusion. Honor the humanity of each person and contribute to a community that provides all with a sense of belonging. <i>Grow in the light of human connection</i>	The life you build for yourself will be founded on how much you trust and rely on your unique talents and thinking. Self-reliance frees you to become who you are meant to be. Persist when you encounter obstacles and know that you can seek guidance to help you grow. Set goals and work hard to reach them. Diligence has its own rewards. Confidently choose what's best for you, balancing life's demands. <i>Forge your own path</i>	Those who earn the respect of others conduct themselves honestly and adhere to principles in the face of adversity and social pressures. Tell the truth no matter how difficult. Accepting responsibility earns trust and reveals strength of character. Advocate for justice. Lead by example. Know who you are and let your actions speak for you. Develop your moral compass and demonstrate the courage to honor it. <i>Do what is right, even when no one is watching</i>

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Artwork by Cam Meyer, 2024



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SCHOOL DAY SCHEDULES

Schedules for the 2026-2027 school year

- [Regular School Day Bell Schedule](#): 7:57 am - 2:22 pm
- [Early Dismissal Bell Schedule](#): 7:57 am-12:25 pm (lunch is served)
- [Two-hour delay Schedule](#): 9:57 am-2:22 pm

School Closings, Delayed Openings, and Early Dismissals

When it is necessary to close schools due to inclement weather or other emergencies, please check the DPS website: <https://www.darienps.org/> or check for announcements which will be made on TV, cable, and local radio stations as early in the morning as possible, usually after 6:00 a.m.

Darien Public Schools utilizes [Parent Square](#) for District communications, including emergency notifications. This app enables parents and staff to receive emails and text messages about urgent information from the Office of the Darien Superintendent of Schools. This service relies on information stored in Aspen, our student information system, for contact information. Parents and guardians have the ability to update all of their personal information within [Aspen](#), including phone number, cell phone number, and email address.

The following stations also receive reports of closings, delays, and dismissals as early in the morning as possible:

- WICC Bridgeport 600AM
- WEZN Bridgeport 100FM
- WGCH Greenwich 1490FM
- WNLK or WLYQ Norwalk 1350AM or 96FM
- WSTC or WYRS Stamford 1400AM or 96.7FM
- WABC New York 770AM or 96.6 FM
- Cable News 12 Cable TV Channel 12
- WTNH TV Channel 8

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Academic Center

The Academic Center is an after school program that offers students academic support from content teachers as well as a quiet place to complete homework after school. The Academic Center meets in the Library on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday after school until 3:45 pm. Students should sign-up in advance, but students may drop-in as long as they sign-in with the teachers.

Arrival and Dismissal

Students who arrive early to school may enter through the bus loop side door beginning at 7:30. Eighth graders will report to the Cafeteria, and Sixth and Seventh graders will report to the Gyms. Students arriving for scheduled rehearsal or club meetings, or who have made arrangements with their teachers for extra help, may enter through the front door beginning at 7:20.

Students are dismissed at 2:22; buses leave from the bus loop and families may pick up from the front loop.

For both drop off and pick up, families who drive their students to school are asked to respect our neighbors by not parking on Edgerton, Ridgley, or Colony. Please do not enter the bus loop or lower parking lot, as it disrupts the flow of traffic. Students may exit cars as soon as they pull up to the curb. Drivers should use the right lane (adjacent to the building) if they plan to exit right onto Hollow Tree Ridge Road. Drivers who will turn left exiting onto Hollow Tree Ridge Road should utilize the first row of the parking lot. Please do not drop off in the second or third parking rows. Walkers should remember to cross only at the designated crosswalk for safety.

The Late bus will begin running the week of September 23; the bus leaves MMS at 3:50 pm. (more information available at [District Late Bus website](#))

Bus Transportation

Bus route assignments are published on the [transportation page](#) of the District Website and can also be seen in Aspen. Students may not change bus stops without prior approval by the school and district, and notification by the parent. All requests for changes to busing and

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stops are subject to approval by the school and district, and are contingent upon available space on the bus and acceptable bus behavior on the part of the student. All transportation inquiries may be directed to Dani Powers at Central Services: DPowers@darienps.org

Late buses for after-school activities will depart MMS at 3:50 pm. Late buses will begin on September 23, 2026.

Citizen of the Month

Each month, MMS focuses on a different theme to build school culture. At the end of the month, each team of teachers identifies one student to honor who has embodied this theme and made positive contributions to the school community.

Clubs & Extracurricular Activities

Middlesex Middle Schools runs many clubs for students to explore and develop a wide range of interests while fostering community. Most activities will begin the week of September 23, when the late buses begin. A full directory of Clubs & Extracurricular Activities will be published early in the school year. Students who have an idea for a club that does not yet exist should reach out to Assistant Principal Mr. Monahan.

Extra Help

We deeply value the strong relationships that exist between students and faculty as one of the greatest strengths of our community and essential to meaningful learning. Student-teacher meetings are an important opportunity to support students' growth. These opportunities provide time for students to ask questions, receive feedback, and build a strong understanding of their learning. Just as importantly, these conversations help strengthen relationships so that each student feels seen, known, and valued. At MMS, the following guidelines for student-teacher meetings prioritize student well-being and appropriate professional boundaries in all interactions:

- When appropriate for the learning tasks, extra help before or after school should be scheduled in groups.
- To facilitate supervision and visibility, meetings before and after school should be scheduled in shared classrooms, in common spaces, or visible from the hallway with the door open.
- When it is most appropriate or necessary to meet with a student individually, these meetings should also take place in spaces that provide clear visibility into the classroom, with classroom shades open.

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- All interactions should be conducted with respect for the comfort level and needs of our students, ensuring they have the opportunity to advocate and communicate their needs.

Teachers will communicate their before and after school extra help schedules early in the school year. Please reach out to your (child's) teacher directly for questions about extra help in a specific class or to your (child's) team leader or school counselor for general questions about extra help.

FLEX

Through FLEX, students meet daily with their assigned Flex teacher with other students on their team. Students participate in activities to build community, develop social and emotional skills, and work on academics. This year, our FLEX schedule will include extra time during the first week to help orient students back to school.

Starting **Monday, August 31**, FLEX will be a 24 minute period and the time will be used as follows:

Monday: Morning Meeting & Team Building

Tuesday: Academic Support & Study Hall

Wednesday: Advisory Activities & Social Emotional Learning

Thursday: Academic Support & Study Hall

Friday: Sit Together And Read (STAR)

Helpful Staff to Know

MMS is filled with friendly faces and adults who want to help you! In addition to our team of teachers and support staff, some other adults you may get to know in your time at MMS are:

- Our **Campus Monitor** supports school safety and is primarily positioned at the front door of the building.
- Our **Nurses** support students' health and wellbeing; you can learn more about our nurses [here](#).
- In partnership with the Darien Police Department, **School Resource Officer** Kevan Taggart contributes to a safe and positive school environment (for more information,

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see [here](#)). Officer Taggart can be reached at 203-655-2518 ext. 3457 or ktaggart@darienps.org

- The **Teen Talk Counselor** will collaborate with school staff and serve as a school-based Mental Health Counselor to provide therapeutic services to students struggling with a variety of issues, including stress, peer relationships, depression, anxiety, school avoidance, and academic challenges. The Teen Talk Mental Health Counselor also offers a connection between students and community resources and supports.

Lockers

Each student is assigned a locker with a lock, which they will learn how to use during the first week of school. **All backpacks and bookbags must be kept in lockers** for the duration of the school day. **Students may *not* utilize a string bag or other bag to carry supplies from class to class** and are encouraged to use their lockers during passing times.

Per the District's [PK8 Personal Mobile Device Plan](#), any student whose family has chosen to send them to school with a personal device must store their personal mobile devices, including but not limited to smartphones and smart watches, turned off and in their locker at all times. (see also: [Personal Mobile Devices](#))

Lunch

Lunch periods are assigned by grade level:

- Period 4: Grade 6
- Period 5: Grade 8
- Period 6: Grade 7

All students will report to the cafeteria at the start of their lunch period. Students are welcome to bring or purchase lunch each day. [Darien Food Services](#) is operated by Chartwells; money can be added to a student's lunch account online through MySchoolBucks, or by bringing cash or a check made out to the "Darien School Lunch Program" to the main office, or to any lunch cashier. School lunch menus can be found here: [School Lunch Menus](#)

Many students have food allergies that can be serious. **Students are not permitted to share food in the school**, as sharing food can lead to accidental exposure and severe allergic reactions. Students **may not** have food delivered by delivery services, though parents/guardians may drop off lunch for their child(ren) only, when necessary.

After eating in the cafeteria, students are expected to clean up after themselves, including disposing of all garbage, wiping down their tables, and sweeping the floor under their table. A lunch monitor will dismiss students once the table area is clean.

After eating, students may choose the recess – social or personal break – that best suits their needs. As soon as students finish eating and cleaning their table, they may access outdoor recess (weather permitting) to play games and socialize; students are expected to remain outside for the duration of the period.

- After the first 21 minutes of the period, students will have access to:
 - **Cafeteria & Indoor Recess Games:** Students who would like an extended lunch to eat or socialize are welcome to stay in the cafeteria; students who choose to remain in the cafeteria may access the indoor recess supply of puzzles, games, and sticker activities.
 - **Open Art Studio:** Students may go to the grade level Art Room to work on projects for their class or participate in Open Arts or Crafting. (Offered two days a week.)
 - **Quiet Study Hall:** Students who wish to work or read in a quiet environment have access to a traditional study hall in the library. Chromebooks will be accessible for school work only.
- Students may also be scheduled to participate in other activities and services during the second half of the period, such as Music Lessons or Special Education Services

Students are expected to respond to the directions of all adults supervising the cafeteria and recess spaces, including members of the Chartwells Food Services staff and DPS Lunch Monitors. Failure to comply with directions or expectations may result in loss of privilege to access a specific recess space for a period of time at the administration's discretion.

Meetings

Parent meetings (including PPTs, 504s, and Team Meetings) may be held remotely via Teams, by telephone, or in person. We will work with families to determine the best format for meetings that suit your family's needs and the meeting's agenda, and work together to schedule accordingly.

Program of Studies

A typical program of studies at MMS includes:

Grade 6	Flex English A (Reading) English B (Writing) Math Science Social Studies World Language Art (1x/week) PE (2x/week) Music (2x/week)
Grade 7	Flex English Math Science Social Studies World Language PE (3x/week) Music (2x/week) Quarterlies (5 days per week for one quarter of the school year): Art, STEM 7, Computers, Healthy Living 7
Grade 8	Flex English Math Science Social Studies World Language PE (3x/week) Music (2x/week) Quarterlies (5 days per week for one quarter of the school year): Art, STEM 8, Computers, Healthy Living 8

Individual student schedules may reflect variance as determined by Planning and Placement Teams, 504 Plans, MTSS intervention plans, or multilingual learner support plans.

Additional information about course curricula can be found [here](#).

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Report Cards & Grades

Students and their parents are encouraged to monitor Aspen to ensure that they are keeping up with their academic expectations. At the end of each quarter, teachers record a letter grade to the student's report card. An email notification will alert parent contacts that the quarterly report card is available on Aspen family portal. Students and their parents are encouraged and welcomed to communicate with the teacher, team leader, and school counselor to discuss questions or concerns related to their child(ren)'s performance.

CONTRIBUTING TO A POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

As outlined in the [Vision of the Graduate](#), Darien Public Schools values and commits to developing our students' Communication, Creativity, Curiosity, Empathy, Independence, and Integrity so that they may “cast and fulfill a purposeful vision for themselves, their community, and the world.” The policies of the Board of Education are meant to foster a positive and safe school environment, such that all students can participate meaningfully in their learning through classroom, social, and extracurricular experiences. Specifically, [Board of Education Policy 5175: School Climate](#) states, “All schools must support and promote teaching and learning environments where all students thrive academically and socially, have a strong and meaningful voice, and are prepared for lifelong success.”

It is the expectation that all members of the Middlesex Middle School community contribute to such an environment through their actions and words. We will:

- Contribute to a culture of learning and growth
- Strive to be our best selves, for ourselves and each other
- Work hard and take pride in our work and our school
- Be responsible for our actions and how we make others feel
- Follow procedures and rules
- Treat one another with dignity and respect in order to form positive relationships
- Solve problems restoratively and collaboratively

Challenging behaviors, or those that negatively impact school climate or interferes, or is at risk of interfering, with learning or safety, will be addressed through tiered restorative discipline practices.

Bullying, including cyberbullying, means unwanted and aggressive behavior among children in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.

Students, parents, and staff members **may file written reports of challenging behaviors and/or bullying** with any building administrator and/or the Safe School Climate Specialist. All reports will be reviewed and responded to consistent with applicable Board of Education Policies.

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At MMS, we believe discipline is an opportunity for learning and growth. In instances when student behavior is in violation of school and district rules, policies, or expectations, the Middlesex Middle School faculty and administration will implement discipline through a balanced approach of learning opportunities, restorative measures, counseling support, service opportunities, and consequences commensurate with the behavior.

With an emphasis on building high-quality, constructive relationships among the school community, each student is held accountable for challenging behavior by participating in activities that ensure that the student has a role in repairing relationships and any harm done to individuals and the community so that all can move forward safely, cooperatively, and productively. While MMS seeks to limit the use of exclusionary responses, consequences commensurate with behavior will also be employed, ranging from loss of privileges, detention, suspension, and in rare cases, expulsion.

(See also: [Board of Education Policy 5175: School Climate](#); [Board of Education Policy 5180 Restorative Practices Response Policy](#); [Board of Education Policy 5220 Student Discipline](#); [Board of Education Policy 5275 Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment](#) [Board of Education Policy 5710 Non-Discrimination of Students](#))

Academic Integrity

The Darien Public Schools commits to Integrity in its Vision of the Graduate: We do what is right, even when no one is looking. Members of the Middlesex Middle School community act with integrity when they are honest; they develop both their moral compass and the courage to follow it, even in the face of challenge or pressure. Each community member assumes responsibility for their work and their learning. MMS opposes and discourages any form of cheating or academic dishonesty.

Teachers who suspect academic dishonesty will consult with their Department Chairperson and the student's grade level Assistant Principal. If in the educators' judgment a student has participated in academic dishonesty, that student will:

1. Participate in a restorative conference, including completion of a reflection.
2. Complete the necessary learning in order to redo the assignment or assessment.
3. Earn a grade for that re-done assignment/assessment, which may be subject to penalty.

Parents will be notified of academic integrity violations by the classroom teacher. Subsequent violations of this policy will be subject to additional tiered response and disciplinary action.

Examples of Academic Dishonesty

- **Aiding** another student's academic dishonesty
- **Cheating** by
 - using unauthorized materials
 - giving or receiving information
 - copying from another student
 - using electronic devices or apps in unauthorized way
 - being dishonest in any way
- **Collaborating** by working with another (student, parent, tutor, etc.) when independent work is required
- **Utilizing AI** in any portion of the work process or submission when not explicitly sanctioned by teacher
- **Destroying or altering** another student's work in an attempt to discredit it
- **Falsifying** citations, sources, and/or results
- **Forging** notes or signatures
- **Plagiarizing** as defined by Webster's Dictionary: "the unauthorized use of language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own" (including copying and pasting someone else's work)
- **Submitting** the same work for different assignments
- **Using** unauthorized examinations, tests, or quizzes
- **Avoiding or prolonging completing** a test or quiz that leads to an untimely completion of the assignment
- **Falsifying** an excused absence to avoid taking a test or quiz or submitting an assignment

Behaviors That Will Lead to Disciplinary Consequences

To keep our school community safe, respectful, and focused on learning, certain actions will result in detention, suspension, and/or other serious consequences. These expectations help ensure that everyone at our school can learn and grow in a safe and supportive environment. (See also: [Board of Education Policy 5220 Student Discipline](#))

These include, but are not limited to:

- **Violence or Threats**: Harming, threatening, intimidating, or harassing others — including physical fights, threatening language, or using technology to cause harm. “Making a joke” does not negate harm or impact.
- **Weapons and Dangerous Items**: Possessing or using any kind of weapon (real or fake), dangerous object, explosive, or fireworks on school grounds or at school events.
- **Drugs, Alcohol, and Tobacco**: Using, possessing, selling, or distributing drugs, alcohol, tobacco, vapes, or related paraphernalia — including misusing household substances or being under the influence at school.
- **Inappropriate Behavior**: Bullying or cyberbullying, hazing, public displays of affection of a sexual nature, horseplay or roughhousing, and unwanted physical contact—including pushing, shoving, wrestling, grabbing, or otherwise putting hands on another person. Students are expected to keep their hands, feet, and objects to themselves.
- **Disrespect or Defiance**: Behaving in a way that disrupts learning, walking out of class, leaving school grounds, failing to comply with the direction of school personnel.
- **Vandalism and Theft**: Damaging, defacing, or stealing school or personal property, including Chromebooks.
- **Technology Misuse**: Using computers, phones, AI, or other devices in a way that is unsafe, inappropriate, dishonest, or violates school rules.
- **Recording and Privacy**: Making unauthorized audio/video recordings or photographing others without prior permission; this includes taking or sharing pictures or videos of community members without their permission.
- **Unsafe Acts**: Creating health or safety risks (including violations of school safety rules), recklessness on school grounds, or recording inappropriate or violent acts.
- **Repeated Misconduct**: A pattern of disruptive behavior such as skipping class, being repeatedly late, or breaking school rules on multiple occasions.

Additionally, other behaviors that interfere, or risk interfering, with a positive climate or safety may result in a disciplinary intervention or consequences. When warranted by the nature or seriousness of the conduct, school administrators may notify or seek assistance from law enforcement. **See also:** [Board of Education Policy 5175 School Climate](#)

Bus Expectations

Safe transportation is a shared responsibility, and the school bus is an extension of the school day and school building. Students who ride a school bus are expected to help create a safe, respectful, and orderly environment for everyone. The bus driver is responsible for the safety of all passengers and must be treated by students with the same respect and cooperation expected toward any school staff member. Students are expected to follow all directions

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given by the bus driver promptly and respectfully, and to follow all directions given by bus drivers.

In addition to classroom expectations, students are expected to:

- Follow all directions of the driver.
- Take only their assigned bus.
- Remain seated and facing forward while the bus is in motion.
- Keep hands, feet, personal belongings, and all objects to themselves and inside the bus.
- Refrain from eating or drinking, and keep the bus clean by disposing of garbage appropriately.
- Respect the bus and all transportation equipment.
- Utilize technology, including personal devices, appropriately and respectfully.

Bus misconduct will be addressed progressively depending on the nature, frequency, or severity of the behavior. Interventions and responses may include:

1. Verbal warning and re-teaching of expectations.
2. Parent/guardian notification.
3. Assigned bus seating.
4. School disciplinary consequences (e.g., detention or other appropriate disciplinary action).
5. Suspension of bus privileges.

Serious safety violations may result in immediate removal from the bus or bypass one or more steps in the progression above.

See also: [Behaviors that Will Lead to Disciplinary Consequences](#)

Detention - After School

After School Detention is held on Mondays and Wednesday in the MMS Library from 2:25 p.m. to 3:35 P.M. 24-hour notice will be given to the student and parent/guardian. Work, athletic practice or games, or extracurricular activities are not acceptable excuses for not meeting the detention assignment. Late Buses are available at 3:45 p.m. for students who require transportation home after detention. During After School Detention, students will use the time to write a reflection about the behavior/incident that led to this consequence, acknowledging any harm caused or that could have been caused, and developing a plan for making better choices in the future.

Detention - Lunch Meetings

Lunch detention meetings may be scheduled by classroom teachers when students do not respond to classroom management interventions or classroom expectations. Teachers will

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supervise to engage students in restorative conversation or reflection with a focus on planning for improvement and repairing any harm caused by the behavior. This may include making up missed or incomplete class or homework. Students assigned a lunch detention are expected to report directly to the designated lunch detention at the beginning of the assigned lunch period, once they have purchased or retrieved their lunch. Students will serve the lunch detention with the staff member who assigned it, or a designee. Failure to report to a lunch detention, arriving late without approval, or failing to meet expectations while serving may result in additional consequences, including, but not limited to, reassignment of the detention or further administrative action. Parents/guardians will be notified of the assignment of the lunch detention by the staff member who assigned it.

Dress Code

MMS values that clothing can be an important part of a student's self-expression. Students are expected to wear clothes that do not interfere with a safe and positive school environment. Specifically, clothing may not convey, support, or imply:

- drugs or alcohol
- violence or profanity
- hateful or discriminatory messages

Additionally, students may not wear headwear including hats, caps, or hoods while at MMS, unless such head covering is worn as part of religious belief or practice, or is for medical reasons. (See also: [Board of Education Policy 5280: Dress Code](#))

Suspension

Students who commit serious or repeated offenses may be suspended from school as a consequence. **In-School Suspension (ISS)** requires students to report to school and spend the day in a designated space, where they will complete academic work from their scheduled classes, and engage in restorative practices to reflect on their behavior and plan for improvement. An adult will supervise and support students throughout the day. Students are not permitted to participate in extra- or co-curricular activities before or after school on a day they are suspended. For an **Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)**, the student is not allowed to attend school or participate in any school activities for a set period of time. (See also: [Board of Education Policy 5220 Student Discipline](#))

ATTENDANCE

Regular school attendance is a strong predictor of success, and all MMS students are expected to be in school every day. Legislation mandates regular school attendance. MMS administration, together with teachers, counselors, and other faculty members, will work to monitor and communicate feedback about student attendance as appropriate.

Student attendance will be communicated regularly through phone, email, and Aspen. An automated phone call and email are generated daily for unexcused/unreported absence. Students and parents are encouraged to check attendance records for accuracy. The Aspen Student and Family portal provides immediate, 24/7 access to attendance and grades. Each student can log into [Aspen](#) using their network username and password. Parents/guardians can sign up for an Aspen Family portal account [here](#). Questions for the student and family portals can be emailed to aspen@darienps.org or a [Help Desk Ticket](#) can be submitted for any difficulties logging into an existing account.

Types of Absences

Excused Absences (AE) are absences due to personal illness and doctor's visits, religious holidays, court appearances, and/or funerals/death in the family. Prior to the student's tenth cumulative absence in the school year, absences for special activities or emergencies will be excused with parental consent.

Unexcused Absences (A) include any absences that do not fall under the categories above.

Under Connecticut State Law, parents/guardians can excuse the first nine absences for any reason; thereafter, absences are considered unexcused unless documentation is provided within 10 days for the following reasons specified in the State's [guidance](#):

- Student illness (*Note: to be deemed excused, an appropriately licensed medical professional must verify all student illness absences, regardless of the absence's length*).
- Student's observance of a religious holiday.
- Death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family.
- Mandated court appearances (additional documentation required).
- The lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends.
- Extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by district administrators that meet certain criteria.

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Parents will be notified when student absences reach 10% or more of school days. Parents will be invited to attend a meeting if student absences reach 10 or more during the school year.

Tardiness & Late Arrival to School

Instruction begins with the bell at 7:57 am each morning, so it is important that students are present and ready. **Students who are late to school must sign in with the attendance secretary** or the main office prior to going to class. Ongoing tardiness can impact a student's academic progress and participation. Parents will be notified when students reach 5 unexcused tardies. Frequent tardiness to school or class may result in disciplinary consequences, including after school detention. **Tardy** to school or class is indicated in Aspen by (T) for unexcused Tardy or (TE) for tardy excused.

Reporting Absences & Early Dismissals

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 through Aspen. Students may not report or excuse their own absences, tardies, or dismissals. **All absences must be reported during the same school day of the absence.** A robocall will notify parents if their child has been marked absent by teachers in the first three periods of the day without a parent notifying the absence. Parents should call the Attendance Secretary at 203-655-2518 ext. 3321 with any questions or updates regarding their child's attendance record.

Where available, doctor and/or dental appointments should be scheduled for after-school hours or periods when a student is not scheduled for classes. If such arrangements are not possible, such absences will be excused only if an appropriate appointment notice or doctor's letter is brought to the attendance secretary. Ongoing medical appointments during the school day or extended school absences require prior administrative approval.

Please note: **Students may not go home for illness or injury during the school day without being dismissed from the Nurse. Students are not permitted to walk or ride bike/scooter home in the middle of day, or for other early dismissals.**

Notification of Extended Absences

Family vacations and other extended absences should be scheduled in accordance with school vacations. Class time and learning experiences lost for whatever reason have a direct and negative effect on the student's education. In the event that a student and their family is

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planning an extended absence of **more than two school days**, they are expected to communicate with counselors and teachers in order to plan to meet their academic requirements despite missing school.

Teachers are not required to provide special work for students who will be absent for reasons such as a family vacation and are not obligated to provide extra help or tutoring upon the student's return.

(See also: [BOE Policy 5130 Student Attendance, Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism](#))

TECHNOLOGY

(For more information, see also: [Darlen Public Schools Technology Department Website](#))

Anonymous Alerts

The Anonymous Alerts anti-bullying and safety app reporting systems helps combat bullying and other negative activity in schools by empowering students to speak up and have communication with building/district administrators about their concern. We continue to encourage students to speak directly with an adult at school when they are able to. Anonymous Alerts does not replace emergency services or support lines. (see also: [Anonymous Alerts district webpage](#); Contributing to a Safe School Climate)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Darlen Public Schools Student Guidelines

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to digital systems designed to complete specific tasks. Your smartphone's facial recognition, virtual assistants like Alexa and Siri, and social media algorithms all use AI. Generative AI (GenAI) is a newer technology that creates original content, including text, images, and music, by learning from existing data. If used appropriately, AI supports digital literacy, learning, and productivity in school and beyond.



What is AI's Role in the Classroom?

AI's purpose in our learning environment is to augment, not replace, the effort put into learning. AI in the classroom can provide personalized support, rapid feedback, and engaging learning experiences tailored to individual needs and progress. With teacher permission, AI may be used to facilitate tasks, but not to complete them, ensuring you develop necessary skills.

Data Privacy and Security

Ensuring data privacy and security is important when using GenAI tools. Safeguard your privacy! Never input any personally identifiable information (PII) or confidential information into AI systems. Only use accounts provided by your teachers through your school log-in.



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Tips

1. Always start by asking your teacher if you can use GenAI on the work you are assigned.
2. Be sure to track your usage of the tool. One way you can do this is to copy and paste your conversation into a Word or Google document.
3. Always explain how you used the tool when you submit your assignment.



Appropriate AI Usage

Research Assistance: Gather knowledge and information for a topic, assignment, or assessment.

Brainstorming: Collect ideas to help start new work.

Practice and Revision: Utilizing AI for practice exercises, grammar checks, and feedback.

Personalize Learning: AI may help you learn at your own pace.



Inappropriate AI Usage

Submitting AI-Generated Work: Turning in assignments entirely created by AI without disclosure.

Plagiarism: Using AI to rephrase existing content without proper citation.

Misinformation: Relying on unchecked AI-generated information.

Not Asking Permission: Submitting work without confirming that GenAI is permitted to be used

Chromebooks

Beginning with the 2026–2027 school year, MMS will implement a Chromebook Cart model as part of our commitment to the intentional use of technology. Teachers will determine when and how Chromebooks are used to meaningfully support instruction, student learning, collaboration, or assessment.

When using a school-issued Chromebook, students are responsible for handling the device appropriately, following teacher directions, and using it only for its intended educational purpose. Teachers will manage the distribution and return of classroom Chromebooks, and may monitor student Chromebook activity through Securly. Students are expected to use all computers, networks, applications, and other technology resources at MMS responsibly and in accordance with the [District's Acceptable Technology Use Agreement](#).

Students may not access another person's account, share or misuse passwords, attempt to bypass District security or filtering systems, alter or damage equipment, or access systems or information without authorization. Students may lose access to District technology resources and/or receive disciplinary consequences for misuse.

To protect the privacy of students and staff and maintain an appropriate learning environment, students may not use Chromebooks or other devices to photograph, audio record, video record, or otherwise record classroom discussions, lessons, students, or staff without prior authorization from a teacher or administrator.

Students should immediately report any damage or malfunction of a Chromebook to the supervising teacher and should not attempt to repair or alter the device themselves. The District understands that accidental damage may occur during appropriate school use. Families will be financially responsible for damage or loss determined through administrative review to have resulted from intentional misuse, willful negligence, or failure to follow established expectations for the care of school-owned technology.

(See also: [BOE Policy 5300 Computer Responsibility](#))

Google Classroom

Teachers may use Google Classroom as a way of posting class assignments and lessons, as well as communicating information. Students will be given a join code for each Google Classroom, and each team also maintains a website. Parents may be invited as

guardians on their own students' DPS google accounts to access Classroom announcements. Please contact your child(ren)'s classroom teacher or Team Leader if you have any questions.

Personal Mobile Devices

There is a growing body of research indicating the effects that mobile smart devices, particularly cell phones and smart watches, are having on children and young adults. Darien Public Schools implements a [PK8 Personal Mobile Device Plan](#). At MMS, our administration and faculty agree with the growing consensus that these technologies distract students from their academic learning and social connection. Therefore, **the use of all personal mobile devices is prohibited at Middlesex Middle School**. Students are provided with district-approved and protected devices as needed for teaching and learning purposes (see also: [Chromebooks](#)).

For the purposes of these guidelines, a personal mobile device references any electronic device that may be carried or worn by a person that might allow digital communication, location tracking, or provide entertainment through multimedia. Such devices may also feature the ability to record and/or transmit images, audio, video, or text between the devices in a wireless capacity, such as by Bluetooth, wifi, or cellular service. Examples of common current products include smart watches, tags, rings, cell phones, laptops, e-readers, portable gaming systems, and augmented and virtual reality headsets.

Should a student need to communicate with their parent(s) during the school day, or in the event that a parent/guardian needed to get a message to their child(ren), the administrative assistants in the Main Office will be able to assist. In the unlikely event of an emergency during the school day, parents will receive communication through official channels.

Any student whose family has elected to send them to school with a device is required to store that device turned off and in their backpack in their locker. Students who are in violation of this plan will be directed to turn in their device to the faculty member who has observed that device, which parents will need to pick up in the Main Office from 2:30-4:00 Monday through Friday.

Some personal devices are used to monitor a student's health, such as insulin levels or blood pressure. Students using a device for a clearly defined medical purpose must have this accounted for within a student medical accommodation plan, which will require notification from a health care provider. Use of that device must be exclusively for that described medical purpose. Any other approved exemptions to these guidelines will be handled when requested on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the building principal and family.

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(see also: [Darien Public Schools PK8 Mobile Device Plan](#))

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) is an educational framework designed to provide targeted support to students based on their individual needs. The system is structured in tiers, with the first tier focusing on high-quality, evidence-based instruction that meets the needs of most students. As students' needs become more specific or intensive, they move to higher tiers, where more individualized interventions are provided. The goal of MTSS is to ensure that all students, regardless of their starting point, receive the support necessary to succeed academically, socially, and behaviorally. MTSS in the Darien Public Schools reflects a comprehensive, integrated approach to meeting students' academic, behavioral, social, and personal needs. Through collaborative data-based decision making and a commitment to continuous improvement, the District ensures that supports are responsive, equitable, and designed to promote success for every learner.

Section 504

It is the policy of the Darien Board of Education to identify, evaluate, and provide appropriate educational services for students who are handicapped within the definition of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Due process rights of handicapped students and their parents under Section 504 will be enforced. Inquiries about a student's Section 504 Plan should be directed to the student's case manager; complaints about Section 504 should be directed to the grade level Assistant Principal. If issues are not resolved, the complaint should be directed to Director of Counseling Cathy Ostar or Ms. Shirley Klein, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Student Services. (See also: [BOE Policy 5125 Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#))

Special Education Services

Students bring many unique abilities, strengths, and learning styles to our school community. When a student is having difficulty, teachers, parents, or even the student are encouraged to share their concerns with school staff, so that support and/or interventions are explored and, if needed, implemented. In some cases, a referral to a Planning and Placement Team (PPT) to begin the special education evaluation process may be appropriate.

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Eligibility for special education is determined by the Planning and Placement Team (PPT), which consists of professional staff members, the student, and the student's parent(s) or guardian(s). Any parent, teacher, or student who believes that a student is having difficulty in school should notify an administrator, teacher, school counselor, or school psychologist, who will begin the referral process.

In order to be eligible for services, a child must be identified by the PPT as a student with a disability, with an educational impact, who requires specialized instruction.

When a student is determined to be eligible for special education services, the PPT will develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that outlines the services the student needs. Common supports that a student may receive as part of their IEP include specially designed instruction through a Resource Room or co-taught classes, and counseling.

The Darien Public Schools Special Education Standard Operating Procedures Manual (SOPM) and the [Parent's Guide to Special Education Services](#) in the Darien Public School outline the special education process and related policies in greater detail. These resources may also be found on the [Special Education Department website](#).

Counseling Department

The Counseling Department offers individual and group counseling, workshops, and a variety of programs. School counselors meet regularly with parents, teachers, administrators, and other key resource people who assist students in their education and development. A student's counselor is assigned to them at the beginning of grade 6 and follows the student's progress for all three years at MMS.

The School Counselors at MMS are:

Grade 6	Casey Westcott (cwestcott@darienps.org)	Ext. 3675
	Jaclyn Petrasanta (jpetrasanta@darienps.org)	Ext. 3365
Grade 7	Danielle Jenkins (djenkins@darienps.org)	Ext. 3262
	Greg Carnevali (gcarnevali@darienps.org)	Ext. 3258
Grade 8	Samantha Vanleeuwen (svanleeuwen@darienps.org)	Ext. 3219
	Emily Berezecky (eberezecky@darienps.org)	Ext. 3364

School Psychologists

School psychologists at MMS work with students experiencing problems that may interfere with achievement of educational or personal goals. School psychologists are available to

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meet with students regarding situational problems or when help is needed managing crises. Students or concerned parents may make an appointment directly with the psychologists. A member of the professional staff may also refer a student. Psycho-educational evaluation through individual testing may be warranted in making a determination of the student's needs. In such cases, prior signed permission from the parent must be obtained. Referrals for such testing are processed by the Special Education Department.

The school psychologists at MMS are:

Grade 6	Katie Petruzzelli	ext. 3323
Grade 7	Monique Ross	ext. 3333
Grade 8	Patti O'Meara	ext. 3255

School Social Worker

The school social worker, Anna Jacobson (ajacobson@darienps.org), is available for consultation regarding personal, family, or school problems and when appropriate will facilitate referral to other community resources. The social worker meets with students both individually and in small groups to address personal issues as they relate to educational success. The school social worker can make home visits to improve a student's attendance, can offer support to parents to resolve conflicts, and is available for consultations regarding links to other agencies.

Teen Talk Social Worker

Teen Talk is a program run by [Kids in Crisis](#). The Teen Talk Mental Health Counselor offers a linkage between students and community resources and supports. The Teen Talk Counselor collaborates with school staff and serves as a school-based Mental Health Counselor to provide therapeutic services to students struggling with a variety of issues, including stress, peer relationships, depression, anxiety, school avoidance, and academic challenges. MMS Students and Families also have access to the 24/7 Kids in Crisis Hotline: 203.661.1911

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENTS

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IN SCHOOL PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES

Darien Public Schools is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons. Darien Public Schools does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race, color, religious creed, sex, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability (including, but not limited to, intellectual disability, past or present history of mental disorder, physical disability, or learning disability), genetic information, or any other basis prohibited by Connecticut state and/or federal non-discrimination laws. The Darien Public Schools does not unlawfully discriminate in employment and licensing against qualified persons with a prior criminal conviction.

Specific complaints about the conduct of the school may originate with school personnel, students, parents, or other citizens. Such complaints should be made in writing to the building administrator in charge. It will be investigated and resolved expeditiously. Should this process not resolve a complaint that concerns practices in the school system that may be discriminatory, the complaint should be directed as follows:

Marjorie Cion, Director of Human Resources, mcion@darienps.org, 203-656-7400

SEX DISCRIMINATION AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

It is the policy of the Darien Board of Education that any form of sex discrimination or sexual harassment is prohibited, whether by students, Board employees or third parties subject to the control of the Board. Students, Board employees and third parties are expected to adhere to a standard of conduct that is respectful of the rights of students. Any student or employee who engages in conduct prohibited by this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action. Victims of sex discrimination or sexual harassment should promptly report such claims to the principal unless that individual is the subject of the complaint, in which case the complaint should be forwarded directly to the Superintendent of Schools. In addition, a copy of any complaint filed under this policy shall be forwarded to the Title IX Coordinators listed above. (See also: [BOE Policy 5275 Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment \(Students\)](#))

Reports of Suspected Abuse or Neglect of Children

CT General Statute 17a-101 requires school employees who have reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child has been abused or neglected, or placed in imminent risk of serious harm, to report such suspicions to the Commissioner of Children and Families or the local law enforcement agency. (See also: [BOE Policy 4025 Reports of Suspected Abuse or Neglect of Children](#))

Selected Darien Public School Policies

Many District policies relevant to Middlesex Middle School and its students are found below; the complete listing of Darien Public Schools policies can be accessed on the [Board of Education Policies](#) page of the District website.

[BOE Policy 1100 Pesticide Application on School Property](#)

[BOE Policy 1320 Civility and Respectful Conduct](#)

[BOE Policy 3150 School Activities Funds](#)

[BOE Policy 4025 Reports of Suspected Abuse or Neglect of Children](#)

[BOE Policy 5025 Management Plan and Guidelines for Students with Food Allergies and/or Glycogen Storage Disease](#)

[BOE Policy 5050 Administration of Medication in the Schools](#)

[BOE Policy 5125 Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#)

[BOE Policy 5130 Student Attendance, Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism](#)

[BOE Policy 5150 Admission of Resident, Non-Resident, and Exchange Students](#)

[BOE Policy 5175 Safe School Climate](#)

[BOE Policy 5180 Restorative Practices Response Policy](#)

[BOE Policy 5200 Homeless Children and Youth](#)

[BOE Policy 5220 Student Discipline](#)

[BOE Policy 5225 Drug and Alcohol Use By Students](#)

[BOE Policy 5250 Misconduct Related to Voluntary School Organizations and Activities](#)

[BOE Policy 5255 Search and Seizure](#)

[BOE Policy 5265 Confidentiality and Access to Education Records](#)

[BOE Policy 5275 Prohibition of Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment \(Students\)](#)

[BOE Policy 5280 Dress Code](#)

[BOE Policy 5300 Student Use of District's Computer Systems and Internet Safety](#)

[BOE Policy 5325 Student Privacy](#)

[BOE Policy 5375 Suicide Prevention and Intervention](#)

[BOE Policy 5380 Student Wellness](#)

[BOE Policy 5710 Non-Discrimination of Students](#)

[BOE Policy 5260 Fundraising Activities](#)

[BOE Policy 6210 Instructional Materials - Selection and Adoption](#)

[BOE Policy 6220 Challenges to Instructional Materials](#)

[BOE Policy 6330 Curricular Exemptions](#)

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