

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Dear Morton Middle School Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to the 2026-2027 school year! We are hoping that you and your family have had a wonderful summer and that our students will be ready to return for a productive and enjoyable school year.

Please mark your calendar for our **back-to-school night** on *Thursday, September 3* (school starts on the following Tuesday). Feel free to stop in at any time between 5-6:30 PM to meet your child's teachers, get some extra locker practice, find your child's classrooms, drop off school supplies, and visit our PTO table. We hope to see you all there!

Our school day at Morton takes place from 7:25 am-2:45 pm. Students are able to come into the building as early as 7:00 and should report directly to the gym or cafeteria (if they would like breakfast). We will continue to have our Monday one-hour early release days every week to allow for valuable teacher team time. **Students will be dismissed at 1:45 pm every Monday**, and bus routes will run as normal (just an hour earlier), or students can be picked up from school (6th grade in the front of the building and 7th/8th in the back). **We will also continue to have our district-wide monthly (almost) 2-hour early dismissals for staff collaboration time.**

While our main focus in the classroom is to help our students to be successful in academics and prepared for the next level of their education, we also feel it is important to highlight the positives that we see on a daily basis from our students. Staff members will continue to issue Amazing Aviator tickets to students who go above and beyond and display the Aviator Expectations. Students can then enter drawings for daily, weekly, or monthly prizes. We will continue to recognize outstanding academics, attendance, and behavior through our grade-level/building incentives, Aviators of the Month, and end-of-the-year Aviator Ace awards.

We strongly encourage all of our students to *get involved* in order to get the most out of their middle school years. We offer Student Council, Yearbook, MUSE Machine, Fishing Club, Heart and Soul (Middle School Girls on

the Run), Tennis (in the spring), and many other clubs for all grade levels. Honor's Band, Peer Tutors, and National Junior Honor Society are groups that students can apply to be a part of in 7th and/or 8th grade. Interscholastic athletics (volleyball, football, cross country, wrestling, basketball, softball, and track) begin in 7th grade. Being involved can also include taking part in school activities, such as our Spirit Weeks, our "Dude. Be Kind" days, food drives, service activities, etc. These various activities provide opportunities to meet other students with similar interests, to help others, and to be a part of the Morton community.

We believe the middle school years are vital formative years and that it is important to provide additional support and guidance to our students. All of our students participate in our building Advisory program (Flight Plan), and our sixth graders all take a valuable "Life Skills" exploratory class with our school counselors. In addition, our Odyssey program, Aviator Advantage unit, BHS athlete mentor program, and Tier 2/3 program all provide students with positive connections and varied levels of support to help navigate these sometimes-challenging adolescent years. We are also fortunate to continue to partner with Samaritan Behavioral to provide counseling services for students with additional needs.

For those of you who are new to Morton, I would like to take a moment to introduce myself. This is my 35th year in education (21st as a middle school principal), with all of those years in the Vandalia-Butler School system. During this time, I have been a part of the staff at Morton, Smith, and Butler, in the roles of teacher, coach, assistant principal, and principal. We live in the community, and my two boys are graduates of Vandalia-Butler. Therefore, I have been able to see firsthand as a parent the quality education and worthwhile opportunities that my own children have experienced. Finally, my husband, Andy, coaches cross country

and track for Vandalia-Butler. As you can see, we are greatly invested in the community and in the Vandalia-Butler school district.

I encourage you to take an active part in your child's education. Whether you are providing quiet study time, conferencing with a teacher, or attending your child's sporting event or concert, we greatly appreciate and encourage the partnership between school and home. In addition, we have an excellent PTO here at Morton with many opportunities for you to volunteer. Middle school is still an important time to be involved and aware of your child's schooling, interests, and activities.

Finally, I cannot stress enough the importance of communication. I will do my best to keep you informed on a regular basis with ParentSquare updates at least once a month. Any of our staff members may also message, email, or call you if there is a need to discuss something regarding your child, and we may even contact you to share good news about your child. With that said, it is crucial that you reach out to us with any concerns or questions that you might have. We would much rather hear from you so that we can help to answer any questions or resolve issues than to not know something is occurring or have it become more of an issue. I think you will find that the Morton staff will do whatever we can to help our students to be successful. We want to make the middle school experience the best one possible for your child.

Thank you for all that you do at home to support your child's education and to support all that we do here at Morton. We are looking forward to a fantastic year!

Sincerely,
Mrs. Shannon White
Principal

6th Grade Orientation—ALL **6th grade STUDENTS and PARENTS** are requested to attend our 6th grade orientation being held on **Wednesday, August 26, 2026**. The purpose is to help our 6th graders feel more comfortable transitioning to Middle School. Students will meet in the gym and parents will meet in the cafeteria.

Students with last name starting with:

A-L—from 8:30 to 9:45 AM

M-Z—from 11:00 AM to 12:15 PM

7th/8th Grade Schedule Pick-up (Fees to be paid in advance online and all updates/agreements made in PowerSchool)

Tuesday, August 25th—Drop-in Times: 7:00 AM—2:30 PM

Thursday, August 27th—Drop-in Times—7:00 AM—2:30 PM

Thursday, September 3rd —Drop-in Times: 5:00-6:30 PM (during Meet the Teacher Open House)

Orientation for all families NEW TO THE DISTRICT

Thursday, August 27th —5:00 PM –6:00 PM in the Morton Media Center

CHROMEBOOKS

Beginning last school year, we have been able to provide our incoming sixth grade students with new Chromebooks and cases that they will have during their three years at Morton. We are so fortunate to have this in place at this time.

All grade level students will only be permitted to take their Chromebooks home with them once school fees are paid, their Chromebook agreement (signed by both student and parent) is returned to school, and they have signed the Chromebook contract.

Please read through these forms very carefully with your child and help to reiterate the responsibility and importance of taking good care of their Chromebooks and using them appropriately. Unfortunately, we have had too many situations where students lost Chromebook privileges for misuse and too many times where families ended up having to pay for damages to the Chromebooks. While we realize that accidents do happen, we also know that many of these damages could have been prevented with better care on the student's part. Students will also sign a contract during the first week of school explaining how to be a good digital citizen. Feel free to ask your child what this means and please help to reiterate this at home as well.

Thank you for your help with proper Chromebook use and care.

SCHOOL FEES

The 2026-2027 school fee for each student at Morton Middle School is \$95.00 which covers a variety of materials used in classrooms and at school throughout the year. Fees should be paid prior to the first day of school and MUST be paid for students to participate in school activities and field trips. **Payments should be made through Payschoolscentral.** Families who qualify to have school fees waived must complete the necessary paperwork as soon as possible.

School Hours

School hours are 7:25AM —2:45 PM

*****Mondays - 7:25 AM —1:45 PM**

Doors open at 7:00 AM

Drop-off and Pick-Up

Students will be permitted in the building at 7:00 AM. If you drop off your child in the morning, you will need to **drop off in the front** of the building. **Please pull up all the way to the stop sign in order to speed up the process.** Anyone along the sidewalk should have the students exit the car and walk on the sidewalk to the front door. Once those cars exit, we will be able to have an entire new row follow the same procedure. If you are **picking up your child from school** at the end of the day, **sixth grade parents will pick up students in the front of the building**, and **seventh and eighth grade parents will pick up in the back of the building** (forming a U-shape using the exit as the entrance/ exit in order to avoid the buses that line up on the side of the building). Thank you for your assistance in making this process a smooth one.

Please note that *students are not permitted to ride other students' buses*, unless there is an extenuating circumstance. In that case, the parent needs to reach out to Mrs. White, Mr. Rogers, or Mr. Doring to get permission. The student would then need to bring in a signed note from the parent for the administrator to sign and give to the bus driver.

If you would like to *allow your students to walk home* (or anywhere else), we must have a note (signed by you) on file in the office granting them your permission. Please be sure to talk with your child about safety concerns with walking and crossing busy streets.

Visitors/Volunteers

We are required to keep track of all visitors and volunteers in the building. All visitors and volunteers need to sign in at the office and wear a visitor's badge. **NUMBER MAY BE LIMITED AND RESTRICTIONS MAY APPLY.**

Agenda Book

Once again, students will be provided with a 2026-2027 planner/agenda book that includes general information about MMS. This is a great tool to reinforce time management and planning for all of our students. It is also a wealth of information about Morton Middle School and most frequently asked questions. The agenda book also serves as a student's hallway pass. The first planner is provided to every student (included in the school fees); however, the cost is \$6.00 for a replacement.

Dress Code

As you shop for back-to-school clothes, please keep in mind our dress code for school. Also, keep in mind that Morton Middle School is air-conditioned. Clothing not acceptable includes halters, midriff tops, fishnet shirts, tank tops, short shorts, cut-offs, head coverings, low cut pants, sunglasses, costumes, leggings without being appropriately covered, and spandex apparel. See student agenda book for specific requirements. Clothing considered provocative or that carries inappropriate messages such as obscene gestures, profanity, sexual innuendo, advertisements or references to alcohol, drugs or tobacco is not to be worn. Students wearing items that are questionable will be required to make arrangements to change into other garments. Repeated offenses will result in disciplinary action.

Reporting Absences AND Tardies - Morton students ONLY

Parents are required to notify the attendance office for all ABSENCES AND TARDIES. We are required by law to record why a student is not at school. House Bill 410 is in effect—PLEASE REFER TO THE DISTRICT ATTENDANCE POLICY IN THE NEXT SECTION BELOW.

If a student is going to be **ABSENT OR LATE**, a parent **MUST** call the attendance line at **937-415-6689 (leave a recorded message 24 hours a day)** . **Please call as soon as possible when you become aware that your student will be absent or late.** ****Please make every effort to get your students to school every day on time by 7:25 (unless they are ill or have an appointment). When the bell rings at 7:25, students entering the building will be required to sign in and are considered tardy. All students in the district can be bused, so there is really no excuse for a student to have an unexcused tardy. When students arrive late, they are already starting out their day in a stressful manner and are often missing out on instruction. There is also a definite correlation between students with habitual unexcused tardies and absences and lower grades. We understand that sometimes things happen, and that is why we do begin with a warning each semester. However, please know that we will be cracking down on unexcused tardies with detentions (for the 4th and 6th tardies), Friday sessions (for the 8th and 10th tardies), and ISR beyond that each semester. Please help us by working with your child on the importance of being present at school and on time! We believe that teaching students the responsibility and life skills of being on time is highly important to success in life.*

DISTRICT ATTENDANCE POLICY

Under the Ohio House Bill 410, there are two major categories of which parents need to be aware.

HABITUAL TRUANT

Student is absent 30 or more consecutive hours (5 days) without a legitimate excuse.

Student is absent 42 or more hours (7 days) in one month without a legitimate excuse.

Student is absent 72 or more hours (12 days) in one year without a legitimate excuse.

EXCESSIVE ABSENCES

Student is absent 38 or more hours (6+ days) in one school month WITH OR WITHOUT a legitimate excuse

Student is absent 65 or more hours (10+ days) in one school year WITH OR WITHOUT a legitimate excuse

The district will utilize a continuum of strategies to reduce student absence including, but not limited to:

- Notification of student absence to parent or guardian;
- Development and implementation of an absence intervention plan, which may include supportive services for students and families;
- Counseling;
- Parent education and parenting programs;
- Mediation;
- Intervention programs available through juvenile authorities; and
- Referral for truancy if applicable.

School Pictures

School picture day is Thursday, September 10th. Picture retake day will be scheduled for a later date, yet to be determined. **Students must have a picture taken on either of these two days in order to be included in the yearbook.**

SPORTS PAY-TO-PARTICIPATE FEES

Vandalia-Butler City Schools offers first-class academics and extracurricular for students. Pay-to-participate fees assist in off-setting the costs of these extracurricular programs. An extracurricular activity is any activity that meets before or after school and is not directly linked to the school curriculum.

Pay-to-participate fees are \$75.00 per sport, with a maximum of \$150.00 per student per year. Interscholastic sports programs at Morton are only available for 7th and 8th grade students. Once associated fees have been assessed, please submit payment using Payschoolscentral. If you wish to pay by check or cash, please bring payment in a sealed envelope to the front office at EITHER Morton or Butler High School. If paying at Morton, checks can be made out to Morton Middle School. If paying at the high school, make checks out to Butler High School.

*****All participants/athletes must make full payment of academic fees, as well as pay-to-participate fees to participate in any practice, game or event.**

With questions regarding submission of payment, please contact Kim Thaler at Butler High School at 937-415-6306 or kim.thaler@vbcsd.com".

6TH GRADE NEWS

Welcome 6th graders! We hope you are ready for your BEST SCHOOL YEAR EVER!

In **language arts**, we will concentrate our learning by developing comprehension, higher order thinking, and writing skills by reading a variety of genres.

In **social studies**, we will be studying ancient civilizations such as Mesopotamia, Stone Age, and Egypt by participating in hands-on projects and activities. We will review basic geographical landforms, as well as learn about the types of governments and economic systems. In addition, we will learn about the five major religions of the world.

In **science**, the learning focus will be the application of the scientific method and the engineering design process as we study in-depth topics such as Earth Science - rocks and minerals, Life Science – cells and organization of living organisms, and Physical Science - energy, motion and nature of matter.

Math classes will be focusing on skills such as using ratios, order of operations, geometry, algebraic expressions/equations, fractions and decimal computations, and the utilization of higher order thinking skills to solve problems. To get a jumpstart on your 6th grade math year, we recommend that you review your basic math facts!

We have many exciting learning opportunities planned for you during your 6th grade year at Morton Middle School. The only requirement as you start your journey is to remember the three R's -

- 1.) Be respectful
- 2.) Be resourceful
- 3.) Be responsible

BAND NEWS

6TH GRADE—Sixth Grade Beginning Band Students: We are excited to have you in band this year! If you have not already made arrangements to obtain an instrument for this upcoming school year, now is the time. Please email us if you have further questions at Daniel.Brinker@vbcasd.com and Kirstyn.Stapleton@vbcasd.com. Also, if you are interested in signing up for private lessons, please let us know, and we will get you in contact with an instructor. Welcome to band!

Obtaining an Instrument:

1. Kincaid's Music (Springfield, OH)

Kincaid's Music is our trusted partner for instrument rentals and repairs. They offer an excellent **rent-to-own program** with a variety of price and quality options. Every dollar you spend goes toward owning the instrument—and also covers repairs, exchanges, upgrades, and delivery right to the school. Instruments come with a starter pack, so your student will be ready to play from day one!

2. Purchasing Your Own / Already Have One?

If you're thinking about purchasing an instrument or already own one, **please contact Mrs. Stapleton or Mr. Brinker before purchasing or using it.** We want to ensure your child starts on a quality instrument that won't lead to unexpected repair costs or frustration. Every year, a few students come in with instruments from Amazon, Walmart, or chain stores—or older instruments in unusual colors—and unfortunately, these often end up costing families more in the long run due to repair needs, mold, or poor playability.

Required Supplies—All students will need: *Standard of Excellence, Book 1* for their instrument

Woodwind players (flute, clarinet, and alto saxophone): A cleaning swab

Clarinet & Saxophone players: Reeds (Size 2.5 recommended for beginners). I recommend buying a box of 10 to start with as they will need to be replaced over time.

If finances are an issue, we also ask that you reach out to Mrs. Stapleton and we will help get you connected to other options! If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out: Kirstyn.Stapleton@vbcasd.com

BAND NEWS Contd.—7TH AND 8TH GRADE

We hope you had a great summer—and maybe even found a little time to practice! As we gear up for a new year of music-making, now's the perfect time to get your instrument ready. Make sure it's in good working condition and take care of any necessary repairs or maintenance. Don't forget to stock up on essential supplies like reeds, the *Standard of Excellence* book, cleaning tools, valve or slide oil, and anything else your instrument requires. Let's start the year off strong and in tune!

7TH GRADE NEWS**GENERAL**

The seventh grade teachers would like to welcome the incoming students to the 2026-2027 school year. We are looking forward to meeting all of you when school starts. We hope you have enjoyed your summer, and we are looking forward to an exiting new school year. In the seventh grade, we try to keep open lines of communication by using Google Classroom, Parent Square (for homework reminders), and students' agenda books. In addition, PowerSchool and the PowerSchool app will be very helpful resources throughout the year.

FROM THE NURSE'S DESK
Morton Clinic (937) 415-6614

**All incoming 7th grade students for the 2026-2027 school year:**

- The Ohio Department of Health requires all incoming 7th grade students to receive an additional tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (whooping cough), **Tdap** vaccine, as well as a meningitis vaccine, **MCV4**. Please provide an updated copy of your student's immunization record.
- **All incoming 7th grade students must receive the vaccine by Tuesday, September 22, 2026 or they will be excluded from school/sports.**

Please plan accordingly. A letter was sent home in April. Please have your doctor complete the form **OR** provide an updated immunization record.

All Students - Medication Forms:

- If your student has medication which needs to be taken during school hours, please complete the Authorization for Medication to be taken during the school hours form. This can be found on the Vandalia-Butler website under the Health Tab. This form must be completed and signed by the doctor for prescription medication, as well as over the counter medication. The form may also be downloaded from this site:
<http://www.vbcsd.com/userfiles/344/my%20files/authorization%20for%20medications%20to%20be%20taken%20during%20school%20hours.pdf?id=540519>
- Medication must be received in the container in which it was dispensed by the prescribing physician or licensed pharmacist. Also, please check expiration dates on over the counter meds. We cannot accept expired medication...thank you!

SPECIAL THANKS to the following local area businesses/organizations for their support for 2025-2026:

American Legion Post No. 668
Beckstrom Orthodontics
B & J's Shaved Ice
Chick-fil-A
Christian Life Center
Christy's Family Pizzeria
The Dayton Foundation:
VISIONS An Eye for the Future
Fox's Pizza

Easterling Studios
First Light Church
Kroger
Morton NJHS
Morton PTO
Morton Student Council
Papa Johns
Raising Cane's

Sparks Electric Service
Tasty Traditions Fundraising
T & L Graphics
Texas Roadhouse
Vandalia Recreation Center
Vandalia-Butler Board of
Education
Vandalia-Butler Optimist Club

8TH GRADE NEWS

Dear 8th graders,

Welcome to another exciting school year! We hope you are all feeling energized and ready to tackle new challenges and experiences.

As you begin your 8th grade year, we want you to know that we are here to support you every step of the way. Your teachers, counselors, and administrators are all committed to providing you with a positive and enriching learning environment.

This year, you will have the opportunity to explore new subjects and interests, develop your leadership skills, and take part in extracurricular activities that reflect your passions. Whether you are interested in sports, music, drama, or community service, there are plenty of opportunities for you to get involved and make a meaningful impact.

We also want to remind you to prioritize your mental and physical health this school year. Make sure to take breaks, stay active, and get enough sleep so that you can be at your best each day.

Finally, we encourage you to stay connected with your teachers and peers throughout the year. Join clubs, attend school events, and participate in class discussions. We believe that building strong relationships within our school community is essential for your success and overall well-being.

We are looking forward to a fantastic year ahead and can't wait to see all that you will accomplish.

8TH GRADE WASHINGTON, D. C. TRIP

Each year, Morton Middle School 8th graders have the opportunity to participate in the Washington, D.C. trip. **This year's trip is scheduled for November 3-6** with a total cost of between \$1,050.00 and \$1,178.00 depending upon the number of participants. By July 17th, three installments (of 4) should already have been made. Payments can be made online at classicstudenttours.com or by calling 937-439-0032. Once the number of participants is determined, the final cost will be calculated, with the balance being due September 11th. It is a wonderful educational trip that ties directly into the 8th grade curriculum.

TASTY TRADITIONS SCHOOL FUNDRAISER

Morton Middle School will be taking part in a candy and cookie dough sale fundraiser this fall. Before last year, we had not taken part in a traditional fundraiser for quite some time, relying on our Morton PTO, school pictures, and our Kroger Rewards to supplement many of our student activities, field trips, and incentives, as well as staff appreciation items/meals. With less money coming in from these sources and rising costs, we decided to turn to a trusted company that we have used in the past, Tasty Traditions. They sell quality and delicious products at reasonable prices. The fundraiser will last from September 28th through October 9th, and the pick-up date will be on November 18th. Students have the chance to earn valuable prizes, including cash for being one of the top sellers. There will also be various other fun prizes, (yet to be determined) for selling 1, 5, 10, and 15 items. Please consider supporting our students through this fundraiser. Information will be communicated as we get closer to the event.

NEW STAFF MEMBERS

As we head into the new school year, we are excited to introduce our new Morton staff members. We welcome a strong group of educators who will fit in nicely with our existing staff. First, we welcome two music educators who will help to enhance our wonderful music program. Mrs. Abigail Burgess (formerly Ms. Motter) will be joining us from Smith Intermediate to teach our choir classes and one period of music. Mr. Caleb Staten will be joining us to co-teach band with Mrs. Stapleton and to assist with the marching band. We also welcome four additional new teachers to the district - Miss Olivia Follick (7th grade science), Miss Leighton Porter (8th grade intervention specialist), Miss Kacey Voigt (7th and 8th grade language arts), and Mr. Elijah Walters (7th grade math and social studies). Also, Mrs. Shelby Rowland will be returning to Morton as an aide in the Intensive Needs Unit. We are looking forward to adding their new ideas, enthusiasm for teaching, and positive energy to our Morton staff!

PTO NEWS—Membership

The Morton PTO welcomes all students, staff, and families to the 2026-2027 school year! Information on Membership and upcoming PTO events will be relayed/posted as they become available. Stay connected with PTO news and updates by joining the Morton PTO group on Parent Square or by following the Morton Middle School PTO Facebook page.

Morton PTO is excited about getting things moving forward for our students, so STAY TUNED!

2026-2027 1ST SEMESTER SCHOOL CALENDAR

AUGUST

17	PTO Meeting (Office Conference Room)	6:00 PM
18	Board of Education Regular Meeting (C.O.)	4:30 PM
25	7th/8th Grade Schedule Pick-up (agreements updated/fees paid online)	7:00 AM-2:30 PM
26	6th grade Student & Parent Orientation (agreements updated/fees paid online)	
	Students with last name A-L	8:30-9:45 AM
	Students with last name M-Z	11:00 AM-12:15 PM
27	7th/8th Grade Schedule Pick-up (agreements updated/fees paid online)	7:00 AM– 2:30 PM
	Orientation for families NEW TO THE DISTRICT	5:00-6:00 PM

SEPTEMBER

3	Meet the Teacher/Open House	5:00-6:30 PM
7	Labor Day—NO SCHOOL	
8	First day of school for students	7:25 AM—2:45 PM
10	School Pictures	7:40 AM
11	Balance due for Washington, D.C. Trip	
14	PTO Meeting (Office Conference Room)	6:00 PM
15-18	NWEA Testing	
15	Board of Education Regular Meeting (C.O.)	5:30 PM
22	7th Grade - Immunization Record Deadline	
23	District-wide 2-hr. early release	12:45 PM
	7th Grade—First day of exclusion if immunization record not up-to-date	
28-Oct. 9	Tasty Traditions candy/cookie dough fundraiser	

OCTOBER

7	Interim reports available online	
1-9	Tasty Traditions candy/cookie dough fundraiser	
9	District-wide Pep Rally (BHS)	
	District-wide 2-hr. early release	12:45 PM
12	PTO Meeting (Office Conference Room)	6:00 PM
15	Parent/Teacher Conferences (by appointment)	3:00-6:45 PM
20	Board of Education Regular Meeting (C.O.)	5:30 PM
22	Parent/Teacher Conferences (by appointment)	3:00-6:45 PM
29	End of 1st Quarter	
	PTO Haunted Gallows Dance/Party	6:00-8:00 PM
30	Professional Development/Report Day—NO SCHOOL	

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We're on the Web!

www.vbcasd.com

NOVEMBER

- 1 Daylight Saving Time Ends (fall back)**
- 3 ELECTION DAY**
- 3-6 8th Grade Washington, D.C. Trip
- 9 PTO Meeting (Office Conference Room) 6:00 PM
- 10 Marching Band (including 8th Grade) (BHS) 7:00 PM
- 17 BOE Reg. Mtg./State of the Schools (BHS) 5:30 PM
- 18 District-wide 2 hour Early Release 12:45 PM**
- Tasty Traditions FR Order Pick-Up**
- 25-27 Thanksgiving Break (NO SCHOOL)**

DECEMBER

- 8 Winter Band Concert (BHS) 7:00 PM
- 9 Interim reports available online
- 15 Board of Education Regular Meeting (C.O.) 5:30 PM
- Winter Choir Concert (BHS) 6:00 PM

21-Jan 1 WINTER BREAK (NO SCHOOL)

JANUARY

- 18 Martin Luther King Jr. Day—NO SCHOOL**
- 21 End of 2nd Quarter
- 22 Staff Report day—NO SCHOOL**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the Principal	page 1
6th Grade Orientation	page 1
7th/8th Grade Schedule PU	page 1
Orientation for families new to District	page 1
Chromebooks	page 2
School Fees	page 2
General Information	page 2
Attendance Reporting	page 3
District Attendance Policy	page 3
School Pictures	page 3
Pay-to-Participate Fees	page 3
6th Grade News	page 4
Band News	pages 4-5
7th/8th Grade Band News (contd.)	page 5
7th Grade News	page 5
Information from the Nurse	page 5
Recognition of Local Businesses	page 5
8th Grade News	page 6
8th Grade Washington, D.C. Trip	page 6
Tasty Traditions School Fundraiser	page 6
New Staff Members	page 6
PTO News	page 6
Calendar of Events	pages 7-8
Web Site Information	page 8