

NAVIGATING

Middle School



THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL

NAVIGATING MIDDLE SCHOOL

This guidebook is a compilation of many voices, each offering information to help you feel at home in our community. If you have other questions or need additional assistance, please ask! We encourage you to ask questions, and the Middle School Office is the best place to start.

Important Contacts

Welcome Desk/Main Line.....	262.752.2500
Attendance.....	262.752.2541
Middle School Office Lynn Zobel , Administrative Assistant.....	262.752.2551
Bonnie Benes , Head of Middle School.....	262.752.2551
Health Office..... Camille Jensen-Guion, RN	262.752.2660
School Psychologist Mike Boticki, Ph.D.	262.752.2662
SRC..... McKenzie Weaver	262.752.2677

[Prairie School website](#)
[PowerSchool](#)

A Welcome Message from Mrs. Benes

Dear Parents,

Whether students are returning to Prairie or entering for the first time, we want each of them and their parents to know how important they are to us. We also want our students to achieve their highest potential. Prairie's Middle School provides a challenging, well-structured, and innovative environment for our grade 5-8 students.

We study mathematics, English, social studies, science, and world languages. We believe a complete Middle School education not only includes a full academic schedule, but one that also uses the creative side of the adolescent mind. We offer a wide variety of curricular and co-curricular opportunities allowing our students to engage in creative growth and physical development.

This guidebook provides a snapshot of Middle School life and stands alongside the School's [Family Handbook](#). Please refer to this guidebook as you and your student navigate your way through Middle School. Feel free to contact us with questions at any time at 262-752-2551.

Best wishes for a successful school year -- welcome and enjoy all we have to offer!

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bonnie Benes". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Bonnie Benes
Head of Middle School

NUTS AND BOLTS

What are school hours?

Classes are held from 8:30 a.m. - 3:45 p.m.

May students come early/leave late?

Middle School students may come to school as early as 7:30 a.m., when the SRC opens. After school on Monday--Thursday, students may go to teacher-supervised After School Study Hall (ASSH) until 4:30 p.m. If pick-up is not possible by 4:30 p.m., MS students must report directly to Stay & Play (hourly fee charged), which is open until 6:00 p.m. There is no ASSH on Fridays, and students who need to wait for a ride home must report to Stay & Play for pick up there.

Contact: [Jake Lipor](#), Stay & Play Director 262.752.2599

Which entry doors are open during the day?

All entry doors are open before school. By 8:30 a.m., entry doors are locked for the remainder of the day except for door #2, the main entrance at the Welcome Desk. Parents are issued a parent badge each fall for access to the school, and all visitors must check in at the Welcome Desk. If your child is late to school, (s)he must enter via door #2.

How will we know if there is a snow day or delayed schedule?

Many Prairie families depend on the RUSD busing system to transport their children to and from school. Therefore, in the event school must be closed due to inclement weather, we follow Racine Unified's lead. Please check the major television stations for closing information. If school is cancelled or there is a delayed start, that information will also be available to you by calling the school's main number (262.752.2500) or by accessing the [school's web site](#).

What do I do if my child will not be in school?

If your child will be absent from school, arriving late, or leaving early, please report this to the attendance line before 8:30 a.m. (262-752-2541) or contact the [MS Office](#) (262.752.2551). Students can access their assignment calendars and email teachers directly with questions about homework. If you know in advance your student will be absent, please remind him/her to stop by the MS Office for a planned absence form, used for collecting missed assignments ahead of time.

May my child bring a cell phone or iPod to school?

Students bring and use personal technologies at their own risk: The Prairie School is not responsible for these items. If a student is concerned that his/her cell phone or media player could be damaged, lost, or stolen, he/she should leave it at home.

Can my child use his/her cell phone during the school day?

Middle School students are permitted to use cell phones, kept in silent mode, during the school day but must not interrupt or distract the learning environment by doing so. It is strongly recommended that students keep their cell phones in backpacks rather than on their person.

What if I need to get a message to my child during the school day?

If you need to get a message to your student, please send him/her a message using their school email account or a phone text. While students will be allowed to check their phones or iPad during the day, their schedule may not allow them to reply immediately. Please contact the MS Office with urgent messages.

Is there a hot lunch program?

Yes. In Middle School, students may purchase a yearlong lunch pass or buy lunch tickets as needed. Complete information on the lunch program (including how to purchase a lunch pass) can be viewed [here](#).

Where does my child buy lunch tickets?

Middle School students can purchase any combination of full lunch, beverage, or seconds/soup tickets in packets of ten. Students in grades 5/6 get tickets from their advisor while 7/8 students buy lunch tickets from the MS Office. No cash is needed as ticket purchases are charged to the student's account.

May I pack a lunch for my child?

Yes. Beverage tickets for milk or juice may also be purchased.

When do Middle Schoolers eat lunch?

The lunch period begins at 11:05 a.m. and ends at 11:50 a.m.

Where can I find the lunch menu?

The lunch menu is posted on the [school website](#). It is also posted outside the MS Office as well as on the video monitors in the 5/6 and 7/8 hallways.

Does every student receive a locker?

Yes. Each student is assigned a locker. There are no locks and students are expected to respect their classmates' privacy. That said, students are discouraged from storing valuables in their lockers.

What about items that won't fit into a locker?

Projects, sports bags and other larger items may be stored in the MS Office during the school day, or in an area appropriate to that particular item (for example, musical instruments in the storage practice room, golf clubs in the Fieldhouse, etc).

Can lockers be personalized?

Students may set up locker shelves and hang mirrors, photos, etc. on the inside of their lockers only. Birthday decorations also belong on the inside of the locker only. Tape may not be placed on the outside of a locker.

Where is the lost and found?

Please label all clothing and any other personal belongings with your child's name. When labeled items are found, they are returned to their owners. Unlabeled items may

be reclaimed from the Lost and Found lockers outside the MS Office. Items left in Lost and Found over the summer are donated to a local shelter.

What are the uniform requirements?

For specific uniform and casual day expectations, see the table below. Fridays are casual days, but this is an earned privilege dependent upon meeting specific obligations during the week.

Where can I buy uniforms?

Lands' End, J. C. Penney, or Kohl's are good sources for reasonably priced uniforms. P.O.P., Prairie's parent volunteer organization hosts gently-used uniform swap and sale periodically throughout the year. Watch the Weekly (email newsletter sent on Fridays) for dates and locations. Prairie neckties (boys only) may be purchased in the MS Office and will be charged to your student's account.

Are there required PE uniforms?

Students are required to change clothes daily for PE classes, but there is not a mandated uniform. Gym clothes include appropriate shorts or sweats, a t-shirt, and two pairs of gym shoes -- one indoor (no black soles), and one outdoor. Please remind your student to bring their gym clothes home weekly for laundering.

Where can I purchase Prairie spirit wear?

Shop for Prairie spirit wear [here](#). This spirit wear webpage will provide the most up-to-date information on vendors and ordering information.

Regular Uniform Days (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday):

Boys' Dress	Girls' Dress
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Red/white/light blue/navy blue polo shirt• Khaki or navy blue pants• Prairie sweatshirt (red/white/blue or gray)• Black or brown leather belt or red/white/blue	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Red/white/light blue/navy blue polo shirt• Khaki or navy blue pants• Prairie sweatshirt (red/white/blue or gray)• *Prairie plaid skirt or skort, or solid navy blue or khaki skirt or skort no shorter than finger-tip length• Khaki or navy shorts or capri pants

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • or khaki cloth belt • Khaki or navy shorts • Closed toe and closed heel shoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed toe and closed heel shoes
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Wednesday Blazer Day (Wednesdays from mid-October through Mid-May):

Boys' Dress	Girls' Dress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White or light blue collared, button down shirt • Khaki or navy blue pants • Navy blue blazer • Black or brown leather belt or red/white/blue/khaki cloth belt • Prairie-issued school tie (available for purchase in the MS Office) • Closed toe and closed heel shoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White or light blue collared, button down shirt • Khaki or navy blue pants • Navy blue blazer • *Prairie plaid skirt or skort, or solid navy blue or khaki skirt or skort no shorter than finger-tip length • Closed toe and closed heel shoes

Casual Fridays (earned privilege):

Boys' Dress	Girls' Dress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shirts must be neat and clean, appropriate for school • Athletic pants or blue jeans are acceptable • Jerseys are acceptable • Shorts • No tank tops • Closed toe and closed heel shoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shirts must be neat and clean, appropriate for school • Athletic pants or blue jeans are acceptable • Jerseys are acceptable • Shorts and capri pants • Shoulders must be covered, and shorts and skirts/dresses must be no shorter than finger-tip length • Closed toe and closed heel shoes

*Prairie plaid skirts/skorts may be purchased from Goldfish School Uniforms in Milwaukee (414.476.4343), from The Uniform Place (414.258.7888) or from Land's End.

What happens at Morning Meeting?

The entire Middle School community gathers each morning to share announcements and take care of school business. This is the time when club meetings, SRC closings, changes in rehearsals/sports practices and so forth are announced to the students.

How else is information disseminated?

There are video monitors in the 5/6 and 7/8 hallways where daily information is posted. Students are expected to check these monitors throughout the day. In addition, *The Weekly*, our emailed newsletter, is delivered to parents on Fridays and contains information pertaining not only to the Middle School but the entire Prairie community. When specific information is disseminated from the MS Office, it will be sent via email.

Please be sure you have recorded two email addresses in PowerSchool where you want to receive school communications.

What is the tradition of the Middle School flags?

Each incoming 5th grade class has a flag hung in the Middle School in their honor. When the 8th graders move to the Upper School, their flag moves up with them. When they become seniors, their flag is displayed in the US Commons for the year.

HEALTH OFFICE**Do I really need to fill out all of those medical forms?**

YES! State law mandates that your child may not begin school, participate in athletics, or travel on school trips until all the *Emergency Information* and *Consent, Medical*, and *Immunization* forms are on file. Downloadable forms may be accessed [here](#).

What if my child needs medication during the day?

If a child requires prescription or non-prescription medication during the school day, a Medication Authorization Form must be on file with the school nurse, along with the medication in its original container. Middle School students may not carry or self-administer any medications. For more information, to make medication arrangements, or if your child has special medical needs, please contact the [Health Office](#).

What if my child gets sick at school or has an appointment during school hours?

During school hours, if your student becomes ill, s/he must report to the Health Office. The nurse will call a parent if a student needs to go home. Students are expected to sign in/out in the MS Office if they come late or leave/return during the school day.

iPAD INFORMATION

The focus of iPad use during the school day is academic. iPads are an extension of the classroom and a tool for students and teachers to use in education. Please follow the expectations outlined hereafter, as well as the expectations each student and parent have signed off on the Loan Agreement and Expectations for Students documents:

Expectations

- Devices must arrive to school each day fully charged. Loaners will not be issued for machines with low batteries after the second occurrence.
- When using devices in class, students must be on the task assigned by teacher. There are no exceptions to this.
- Only approved apps are allowed on iPads. Any attempt to download an unauthorized app will render the iPad unusable until it is returned to the Tech Desk to be reactivated.

- Classroom teachers will establish rules for use within their respective classes, and they will review their expectations with students. It is expected that students will respect and adhere to these rules without question, including when they are in the SRC and other common areas.
- Be a respectful digital citizen: someone who appropriately and responsibly uses technology 24/7/365.
- Unless directed by a teacher, students will not take and use other students' devices and must ask someone if they may use or hold their iPad BEFORE taking it.
- iPads are not permitted in bathrooms.
- Each student's iPad cover must have the student's last name and graduation year written clearly on it.
- Academic apps should be updated at home to help conserve bandwidth at school.

iPad Use While on Campus	Internet	Music	Personal Apps	Text Apps	Social Network Apps
Before School	Academic Use Only	Academic Use Only	NO	NO	NO
During School	Academic Use Only	Teacher's Discretion	NO	NO	NO
After School	Academic Use Only	Academic Use Only	NO	NO	NO

Students who abuse these expectations will lose privileges, such as use of the iPad at home or during school, or loss of the iPad for a designated amount of time.

ASSIGNMENTS/ASSESSMENTS/GRADES/COMMENTS

Should I buy my child an assignment notebook?

5/6 students will be issued a paper "agenda," which is included in the inclusive fee. 7/8 students primarily use their iPad to keep track of their assignment calendars. 7/8 students are able to purchase a paper agenda but are encouraged to use their iPads.

Do students have a study hall during the school day?

Study halls are built into the master schedule for 5th-8th grade students during their FLEX period. Students are expected to bring study materials with them and be prepared to work.

When are parent-teacher conferences?

Student-led parent/advisor conferences take place in the fall and spring. In addition, advisors and teachers are always willing to answer questions and help when needed. The Middle School uses a student-led conference format which gives students an opportunity to organize and discuss their strengths and challenges in each academic subject, thus helping them develop ownership and accountability for success.

When are grades and progress reports sent?

The school year is divided into semesters, with mid-term progress reports and end-of-term grades and comments viewable online by logging into PowerSchool. End of year report cards are sent in the mail each June.

How can I check up on my child's progress?

Regularly checking PowerSchool is the easiest way to keep track of your child's academic progress. PowerSchool is your window into attendance, grades (both historical and current), mid-term teacher comments, e-mail notification options, your child's schedule, and more. For PowerSchool questions or for your login information, contact the MS Office.

How does my child know when assessments or school work are due?

There are four ways to check when work is due:

- Online Calendar: all 7/8 teachers maintain Google class calendars that are shared with students
- Teachers: verbal announcements, assignments posted in the classroom
- PowerSchool: teachers may opt to list homework or assessments ahead of time
- Agenda: 5th/6th grade students record all assignments in their agenda

Do students take standardized tests?

In the Middle School, 6th and 8th graders take the TerraNova standardized tests over two days in January. Scores are mailed to parents approximately 8-10 weeks following the test dates. Please be sure your student is well-rested and has eaten a good breakfast in preparation for the exams.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS/OPPORTUNITIES**What are advisors and what is advisory?**

- Each student is assigned an advisor who supports him or her and acts as a liaison between the school and home. Students have one advisor throughout 5th and 6th grade and receive a new advisor for 7th and 8th grade. Feel free to contact your child's advisor with any concerns or questions.
- Advisors meet with their students during advisory (the FLEX period) to review assignments/progress, work on homework, and participate in periodic team-

building or character-building exercises or service projects.

What is OEE?

Outdoor Experiential Education (OEE) affords 5th and 6th graders the opportunity each September to participate in leadership training, team-building exercises, and relationship-building between students, faculty and peers. Located in East Troy, Wisconsin, Camp Timber-lee is the perfect venue for this three-day/two-night trip. A mandatory parent information meeting prior to OEE will provide all necessary forms and answers to your questions.

OEE contact: [Alicia Gasser](#)

Do the 7th and 8th graders take class trips?

Each spring, the 7th graders take a class trip to Indianapolis/Cincinnati/Hannibal-St. Louis and the 8th graders travel to Washington, DC. These trips are a required part of the curriculum. Mandatory parent meetings take place prior to the trips to provide all necessary information and answer questions.

7th grade trip contacts: [Jenny Cobb](#) or [Jim Broetzmann](#)

8th grade trip contact: [Alan Mills](#)

What extracurricular activities are available?

In addition to athletics and fine arts opportunities, many clubs and activities are offered at the Middle School level. Meeting times and club sponsors will be announced at the beginning of the school year during morning meetings.

- Math Club -- open to all students in grades 5/6 and 7/8: Hands-on math competition held throughout the school year culminates with 7/8 State Math Counts in March.
- English Fest -- open to students in grades 7/8: Pre-selected young adult literature is read throughout the school year, leading up to a conference in the spring with workshops and an author visit at UW-Parkside and Carthage College.
- Rocket Science -- open to all students in grades 5-8: A hands-on program exploring all areas of science, concluding with the building and launching of model rockets in the spring.
- Foreign Language Clubs -- open to all students in grades 7/8: French, Mandarin, and Spanish Clubs enhance language study through cultural experiences.
- Writing Club -- open to all students in grades 4-6: Students learn that improving their writing (poetry, prose, reporting, etc.) is actually a lot of fun.
- Newspaper Club -- open to all students in grades 5-8: 7th and 8th graders are the editors who control/create the content of TPS Today (digital newspaper), while all MS participants may contribute to various columns.
- Tech Club - open to all students in grades 5-8: Members assist with technology needs in classrooms each day as well as participate in weekly lunches and enrichment activities with IT staff.

What athletic opportunities are available?

The athletic program for grades 5-8 is open to all students, providing opportunities for

intramural and interscholastic sports. The Athletic Department offers Middle School students the chance to experience competition for the first time and/or prepare for high school athletics. An [online registration system](#) is provided for sign up. Offerings include: volleyball, soccer, tennis, cross-country, basketball, track and field, and golf. Students

must attend practice to participate and while the program maintains a no-cut policy, this does not mean equal playing time.

Contact: [Jason Atanasoff](#), Athletic Director or [Dori Panthofer](#), Athletic Department Administrative Assistant

ADDITIONAL THINGS TO CONSIDER

Do students raise money?

Students have the opportunity to participate in several school-wide fundraisers although the frequency and type change from year to year. Proceeds from school-wide fundraisers benefit each student and the school as whole.

How can parents volunteer in the school?

POP (Parents of Prairie) is Prairie's parent organization. The purpose of POP is to work with the parent community at large to enhance the overall student experience. This is done by bringing the Prairie community together to build, enrich, and broaden relationships; facilitating collaboration and dialogue between Prairie faculty and parents; reinforcing the mission of the school; providing useful services to school families; and providing a social connection. Every parent is encouraged to participate in POP activities in order to build a strong, connected Prairie community.

Contact: [Callie Atanasoff](#), POP Volunteer Coordinator

Are there expectations regarding the Prairie Fund?

There is a longstanding tradition at independent schools of having a fundraising program to offset the full cost of educating each student; therefore, every school family is asked to make an annual tax-deductible contribution to the Prairie Fund. When our families come together and give as they are able, this ensures that tuition is kept as low as possible while providing the resources required for the engaging, transformational experiences that we all want for our students.

In recent years, our community's support of the Prairie Fund has resulted in the addition of new faculty positions, a renovation of our green house, new math and science curricula, and expansion of our College Counseling program. Regardless of the size of your contribution, every gift matters!

The Prairie Fund is an annual year-long campaign and over the next few months, you will receive letters and emails with more information on how to participate and why your support matters. You are also always able to give [online](#). We are proud to note we have had 100% participation in the Prairie Fund by full-time faculty and staff for the last three years.

Contact: [Hannah Keller](#), Director of Advancement