

2017-2018 Middle School Handbook



Overview

Three principles form the foundation of the Middle School program. The first is the school's emphasis on a balanced, vigorous curriculum designed to give students the creative thinking skills and knowledge necessary to excel in subsequent schooling and to lead a fulfilling life. This includes being an effective learner and attaining specific skill and content mastery. Faculty utilize interdisciplinary teaching to help students gain perspective on the interrelationships that run across the branches of knowledge. A curriculum that challenges student progress in academics, the arts, and physical education is a vital part of the Middle School program.

Another essential component of the Middle School is the advising program, which ensures that at least one faculty member understands the overall patterns, needs, and strengths of each student. Advisors establish a relationship with each advisee and their family and act as a liaison between home and school. Advisors foster each advisee's academic growth and act as a student's advocate. By modeling good character and leading educational activities in intellectual, character, ethical and physical development, advisors nurture the social and emotional well-being of each child. PDS fosters a safe, inclusive environment that supports students as they develop awareness of the diverse world around them, establish life skills, and create and explore personal identity.

The advising program provides the support for a third principle; as educators, we are concerned with the totality of a student's experience - intellectual, ethical, social, physical, and emotional development. Teachers promote student development of competence in the arts, sports, interpersonal relationships, and academic coursework so students may develop self-confidence and can fulfill their potential.

The realization of these principles depends upon parents and teachers working cooperatively together. Effective communication is a vital component of this relationship

because it creates an atmosphere of trust in which parents have confidence in both the school's programs and its teachers. When mutual trust is cultivated, students become the beneficiaries of a school that fulfills its mission at the highest level. The Middle School faculty is a group of superb educators whose dedication, skill, experience, and professional integrity are of the finest quality. We invite parents to work with us so our young people can have a tremendous year of learning. They deserve no less.

Home/School Communication

The advisor/advisee relationship is the heart of our program and monitors all aspects of an advisee's progress. Advisors meet with their advisees regularly to discuss academic, social, disciplinary, and programming issues, and to help advisees to make sound decisions in all areas of their school experience. The advisor is a child's adult advocate at school and also serves as a key communication link for parents with questions or concerns about their child's progress or school activities. Parents are encouraged to maintain an ongoing conversation with their child's advisor throughout the year.

Who to Contact

That said, given any matter related to a course, problem or concern, the chain of communication should likely be classroom teacher, advisor, dean, appropriate department chair or Learning Specialist/Counselor, Head of Middle School. Use your wise judgment depending on the severity of the concern.

Head of Middle School Renée Price will send weekly emails called Focus Notes to parents regarding school events and important information. In addition, parents are encouraged to log in to the PDS website for announcements and news from the Middle School. Middle School coffees and presentations are held throughout the year on a wide variety of topics. Interim comments are progress reports that may be sent home at any time of the year and are written to indicate improvement or concern in a particular area.

While parents may contact individual teachers and advisors at any time, faculty are formally asked to contact parents in the following ways:

September

- Introductory telephone calls from advisors prior to Back to School Night
- Monday, September 18 - Middle School Back-to-School Night

October

- Friday, October 27 - Informational Mid Semester Grades Due for All Students Grades 7-12 (sent only to students and parents, not recorded on transcripts or sent to colleges)
- Comments Due for Students of concern (any student with a Mid Semester average 79 or below or N)

November

- Parent Teacher Conferences (LS, MS, US) November 1-3
 - Wednesday, November 1 (evening)
 - Thursday, November 2 (day and evening)
 - Friday, November 3 (day)
- The online registration system (pickAtime) is used by parents to sign up in advance for conferences. You must have your child's ID number in order to register for conferences. If you have a strong preference for when your conferences need to take place, you **MUST** be prepared to register as soon as the online registration system is activated. All families will receive an email reminder when it is time to register that will also include instructions.

December

- Monitor progress through ongoing communication with teachers; progress reports can be sent at any time.

January

- Friday, January 19 - End of First Semester (MS and US)
- Monday, January 22 - Beginning of Second Semester for MS and US
- Monday, January 29 - First Semester Grades and Comments Due for all MS/US students (this is the first set of grades that will be recorded on student transcripts for the academic year); Grades and Comments Posted to families approximately 5-6 days later.

March

- Monitor student progress through ongoing communication with teachers; progress reports can be given at any time.

April

- Tuesday, April 24 - Informational Mid Semester Grades Due for All Students Grades 7-12 (sent only to students and parents, not recorded on transcripts or sent to colleges).

June

- Friday, June 8 - Second Semester Grades and Comments Due for all MS/US students (this is the second set of grades that will be recorded on student transcripts for the academic year); Grades and Comments Posted to families approximately 5-6 days later.

Student Life/Health and Wellness

Our Health and Wellness program seeks to empower our students to successfully navigate the ever-changing environment we live in by promoting a healthy physical, mental, and social lifestyle. The curriculum revolves around a number of core topics that focus on self awareness and identification of stress, sexuality, substance use and abuse, social media, and sustainability.

Health educators, movement and fitness instructors, mental health personnel as well as trained Upper School peer leaders will work in conjunction with speakers from our greater community to share important information in their areas of expertise. The multimodal curriculum includes subjects such as emotional fluency, self-care and advocacy, wellness practices, nutrition and safety. It is our hope that providing students with this developmentally appropriate and clinically pertinent learning will inform their decision-making and provide the skills they need to build a productive and healthy foundation for living.

Bridges Program

The Bridges Program prepares our seventh graders for a successful and balanced experience transitioning from childhood to adolescence and young adulthood. By providing guidance and mentorship from trained student leaders from the senior class, middle schoolers will make connections, establish relationships and will be able to observe from their older peer leaders those behaviors that we believe to be important in the cultivation of the whole student.

As another aspect to the global health and wellness curriculum at the Princeton Day School, the Bridges program provides a safe and non-judgmental venue for discussion of topics important to youth today. It will serve as a platform for discussing such topics as: personal character, social responsibility and good decision making through the context of school community, social norms, family dynamics, peer pressure, the internet and social media, sexuality, relationships and substance abuse.

Bridges teams will meet during the DaVinci period on Day 4 from September 2017 until the end of March, 2018.

Student Life/Athletics

Athletics/Tim Williams, Director

Athletics at Princeton Day School play an integral role in the overall education of each student. We believe in the classical ideal of *Mens sana in corpore sano*, "a sound mind in a sound body" with a dedication to the lasting values of personal integrity, responsibility, commitment, teamwork, and sportsmanship.

Our athletic program, which consists of 24 sports and more than 70 teams, is broad enough to prepare gifted athletes to compete at the college level while, at the same time, ensuring that all students are exposed to the lifelong benefits of athletic participation and physical fitness.

Fall

Girls: Cross Country, Field Hockey, Tennis, Soccer

Boys: Cross Country, Football, Soccer

Winter

Girls: Basketball, Volleyball, Ice Hockey, Fencing, Squash

Boys: Basketball, Ice Hockey, Fencing, Squash

Spring

Girls: Figure Skating, Lacrosse, Softball, Track and Field

Boys: Figure Skating, Lacrosse, Baseball, Tennis, Track and Field

Middle School Teams

Our Middle School program promotes participation, providing interested students an interscholastic sports program appropriate for sixth through eighth graders. Our goals are teaching necessary skills and strategies, developing a sense of team, and fostering responsibility and commitment. Coaches do their best to give each player as much playing time as possible but are also mindful of the importance of keeping the game competitive.

Team Selections

Choosing the members of a team is the sole responsibility of the coaching staff. Players will be placed on skill appropriate teams as evaluated by the coaching staff. Although we strive to have every player who tries out for a team earn a spot on the roster, this is unfortunately not always possible when limited by facilities and court space. We have limited participation on our Squash Team to 7th-8th graders only, as our facility will only handle 13-15 players. Since "cuts" are difficult at any age, the coaching staff will make every effort to handle these situations with tact and sensitivity.

The Role of a Student-Athlete

Academics: Academics at PDS certainly do come first, and it is imperative that students maintain their grades in all subjects. Do note, however, that annual studies conducted by the Department of Education have clearly shown that students who participate in co-curricular activities do better in their class work, in part because they have better learned the skill of successful time management. Parents are strongly encouraged to schedule appointments and other activities so that they will not take players away from PDS athletics.

In the event that this is not possible, please communicate in advance with both your team coach as well as Barbara Brent, Assistant to the Head of Middle School, to convey any changes to your child's athletic attendance. You may send an email addressed to both the team coach and to Barbara Brent, bbrent@pds.org, when you must pick your child up early for a medical appointment or early dismissal from school so that your child is properly accounted for by PDS staff. Being present at practices and games is a large component of the PDS Athletic experience and helps our coaches deliver an appropriate grade for the term.

Sportsmanship: While Princeton Day School takes great pride in winning, we discourage any and all pressures which might impede good sportsmanship.

Health: We expect our athletes to prepare for the upcoming season. Being prepared physically and mentally will give them an advantage and set the stage for a rewarding season.

Dedication: Once students are placed on a team, we expect that they will remain committed for the entire season. They are expected to be on time, prepared, physically fit, and focused in practices or games. A positive attitude towards teammates and coaches is also an important expectation.

The Role of a Parent

We believe a partnership among parents, coaches, and players provides a foundation for a successful athletic program and team experience. Your support is crucial to the confidence, progress, and performance of your child. Parents should be enthusiastic, encouraging, and supportive of our children in doing their best at whatever level they participate. Be positive as they progress through the season. We urge you to let the coach be the coach. Regardless of a parent's own sports experience, please do not publicly criticize the coach or teammates. It is crucial to the team's spirit and success that players develop a respect for their coach and teammates. Finally, we ask all PDS community members to demonstrate good sportsmanship at all times.

Team Parents: If you would like to become a formal "Team Parent" and help expedite communication, coordinate special things for the team during the season, and coordinate the season-ending "breakout session," then please contact your child's coach. An involved Team Parent is very important to the positive experience that our teams have during the season.

Physical Education/Mark Adams, Department Chair

Every student must participate in physical education classes in Grade 5. In grades six, seven, and eight, students may elect to participate in interscholastic teams or take part in physical education classes.

All students participating in physical education class must have the following items:

- PDS gym shorts
- PDS gym shirt (reversible for boys, collared for girls)
- white socks
- 1 pair sneakers
- 1 sweatshirt and sweatpants (to be kept in gym locker)
- comb, brush, and deodorant

Uniforms should not be brought to the first meeting of gym class.

Mark all articles with name tags as follows:

- Sneakers - name inside and outside of shoes and inside each sock
- Shorts - name tag sewn on inside of shorts
- Shirt - name tag sewn on inside collar of shirt
- Sweatshirt and sweatpants - name on inside collar and waistband
- Sports Equipment - name on an easily marked and seen area of each piece of equipment

Important: Every student must have medical forms filled out by their physician before participating in gym classes, in sports practice, or on any team.

Student Life/Mini-Course Week

For four days in the winter term, usually during the week preceding Presidents' Weekend, the regular Middle School curriculum is set aside. Students and faculty reorganize in age and gender-mixed groups to pursue theme-centered interdisciplinary learning experiences.

Students may travel on field trips and meet experts in the field as they explore and research topics ranging from Amish living to Stop-Motion Moviemaking.

Mini-Course Week is a regular school week during which all students should be in attendance.

Student Life/Community Service

The goal of this program is to provide opportunities for Middle School students to engage in projects that serve the needs of others within and outside the school's community. Students and teachers are involved in community outreach programs throughout the year.

Student Life/Afternoon Homework Club

It is important to remember that Middle School students require adult supervision at all times. Homework Club is a service offered (for an additional fee) to Middle School students. The program runs from 3:20 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Monday through Friday afternoons.

Homework Club consists of a short recess period followed by a light snack and supervised study, usually in the Middle School Library. Homework Club does not meet on days preceding certain school holidays. Advance notice of these dates will be provided in Focus Notes.

A librarian is present until 4:00 p.m. to assist students with research and technology projects. Students may work in small groups, provided they do not disturb others. With the program, we hope to help ease the burden of many working parents by providing their children with a relaxed, yet supervised and productive, end to the school day.

Please note that the Middle School does not provide supervision after 3:35 p.m. except through its organized extracurricular activities (such as sports practices or games, theater or music rehearsals, Destination Imagination or LEGO Robotics meetings) and Homework Club. The Campus Center and snack bar are available to MS students for 15 minutes after dismissal from school, sports or after school activities. After that, these areas are off-limits to MS students, unless they are directly supervised by a parent, teacher, or coach. Students remaining at school after 3:35 p.m. and are not involved in a school sponsored activity are required to attend Homework Club.

Students who are not in Homework Club or supervised by their parents may not play on the MS playground or other outdoor spaces after school for safety reasons. Those students who are waiting outside at pick-up time are required to go to Homework Club if

they have not been picked up by 3:35 p.m. If they are involved in a sport, they must report to Homework Club 15 minutes after they have been dismissed by their coaches.

Community Expectations

Middle School is a time of transition and physical and emotional change. Students grow in self-awareness about who they are as individuals and how they want to be perceived by others, and increasingly they see themselves as something distinct from the adults in their lives. During these years, they learn to think more about their actions and, even though they can still be impulsive, they mature in the ability to be accountable for and anticipate outcomes of their actions.

The Middle School discipline system rests upon the value of communal respect and the concept that discipline is ultimately self discipline. Even when students understand the importance of cooperation, they still make mistakes. The goal and challenge for faculty is to be understanding and patient, yet clear and firm in our expectations for student behavior. We view discipline as problem-solving and an opportunity for students to grow and learn from their mistakes. We encourage faculty members to address student conflict or misconduct from this point of view.

The Middle School's responses to discipline issues vary according to their level of seriousness, as well as other factors such as intent and patterns of behavior. Most cases are resolved between student and teacher. Sometimes, further action is needed and the conflict is handled by the appropriate dean. When this happens, the dean speaks with the student(s) and gathers other relevant information. When warranted, the dean's typical discipline responses include, but are not limited to, making phone calls home, mediating among students involved, requiring apologies, conversations with the student's advisor or other teacher(s), consultation with the school counselor, and / or detention(s).

If a student is assigned a detention, one of the deans may make a follow-up telephone call to the student's parent(s) and notify the advisor to ensure clear and direct communication regarding the problem. Detentions generally are served during recess with the dean as soon as possible following the infraction.

Repeated minor infractions result in increasingly serious discipline responses, including possible Saturday morning detentions. The following are examples of the kinds of major infractions that require immediate administrative intervention, which could include suspension or expulsion:

- Jeopardizing the safety of others
- Bullying, harassment, or excessive teasing
- Academic dishonesty
- Taking or destroying school property or the property of others
- Using or possessing tobacco, alcohol, or other harmful drugs on school grounds or during any school activity or trip

All reports of disciplinary action involving probation, suspension, or expulsion may be conveyed to the Upper School or to other schools to which a student is applying. In addition, the school conforms to state and federal laws requiring cooperation with the police and other law enforcement agencies.

The school will exercise its obligation to require the withdrawal of a student any time it becomes evident that the school program is clearly not suited to her or his needs, that progress is unsatisfactory, that the student's influence does not serve the best interests of the school community, or that the attitude of the student or of her or his parents is uncooperative.

Harassment Policy

All members of the PDS community have the right to work, learn, and play in an environment that is free from harassment.

Sexual Harassment

All members of the PDS community have the right to work, learn, and play in an environment that is free from sexual harassment. Students should know they have two main responsibilities:

1. Not to sexually harass anyone. It is a serious violation of our community standards and will not be tolerated by the school.
2. If they believe they have been the victim of sexual harassment, to report it to an adult member of the school community.

Students should understand they do not have to cope with this on their own. If they believe they have been sexually harassed, or even if they are not sure if what they have experienced is actually sexual harassment, they should talk to an adult with whom they are comfortable - their advisor, a dean, the School Counselor, the School Nurse, or the Head of Middle School. They should get help to understand what has happened, so they can feel safe and their rights can be protected.

Harassing or Inappropriate Behavior Against Students

No student attending Princeton Day School should be subjected to harassing or inappropriate behavior of any kind, whether such behavior originates from a member of the community, including but not limited to administration, faculty, staff, parent, contractors or other students. This includes any form of harassing or inappropriate behavior based on the student's gender, race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, disability, sexual orientation, or other characteristic protected by law. In addition, any behavior of a sexual or intimate nature between faculty/staff members and students is strictly forbidden, even if such conduct appears to be welcomed by the student. If a faculty or staff member obtains any information which indicates that harassing or inappropriate behavior involving a student may be occurring, they should report such information to the head of school, the division head, the business manager, or the director of Human Resources immediately. In the event the circumstance involves student-on-student harassment, the matter will be handled using established disciplinary procedures in the student's division.

School-Owned iPad Use

Technology is an important part of the learning process that, when managed well, contributes greatly to student success. All students receive school-owned iPads for use at school and home. The iPads are configured and managed at school to be used as tools for learning. iPads also have the potential, however, to distract students from their schoolwork and to expose them to inappropriate material through the Internet. The following guidelines are designed to help students make safe and effective use of technology in the Middle School.

PDS e-mail accounts are provided to all Middle School students for academic purposes and for communicating with teachers. During class time and resource periods iPads and

e-mail accounts should only be used for academic work. iPads should not be used during recess, lunch or traveling between classes.

Image, audio, and/or video capture through the Camera app is for academic use only. All content produced on the school's iPad should show respect for others. Inappropriate use of technology to capture images, audio, or video without the permission of a teacher or a subject is not allowed. Before distributing or posting multimedia files via e-mail or to a public forum, such as Instagram, YouTube or Flickr, students must seek the permission of the supervising teacher or the class dean.

Using an iPad for academic dishonesty, vandalism, theft, harassment, or abusive behavior is a serious breach of our community code of conduct. Material that is sexually explicit, tends to degrade other people, promotes hate speech, or cyber-bullying is strictly prohibited.

iPads use in the Middle School is a privilege and should be treated as such. Failure to follow the guidelines for use may result in a loss of privileges or more serious disciplinary action. When using PDS iPads or the PDS Network you are, by extension, representing your school and a high standard of personal responsibility is required.

Personal Electronics

Personal electronics can be a distraction for our students. While we wish students would simply leave their phones and devices at home, we understand this to be an unrealistic expectation. To help maintain a conducive atmosphere for learning, we are asking everyone to adhere to the following protocols.

1. Non-school owned iPads - must be left at home.

2. Laptops - must be left at home.

3. Cell phones and Wi-Fi Enabled Devices

- Must be powered off and left in lockers or backpacks upon arrival to school.
- Students may not send or receive text messages or phone calls during the school day (upon morning arrival to 3:20 p.m.).
- Students may not use the camera to take photos or videos while at school without teacher permission.

- Wi-Fi enabled devices being used during school hours will be turned over to the dean.
- Cell phones are permitted for after-school use only. During school hours, parents are to call the Middle School office if they need to get in touch with their child.

4. eReaders can be used with teacher permission.

5. Personal gaming devices must be left at home. Gaming should not take place at school on any device.

School Property

The school belongs to everyone. Each individual must assume a personal responsibility to see that no damage or marking of the buildings or their furnishings takes place. Deliberate or irresponsible damage of school property will be viewed as a discipline issue and repair/replacement costs charged to the offenders. Accidental damage should be reported immediately to the Middle School office or dean. Materials or equipment (musical, art, scientific, athletic, etc.) should be used only with the permission of the appropriate teacher in charge.

Personal Property

Princeton Day School is not responsible for any valuables lost or taken from a student at school. We strongly encourage students not to bring valuables to school (jewelry, money, electronic equipment, etc.). Bookbags, backpacks, calculators, cell phones and other personal items should be put in lockers. Students should respect the privacy of another student's locker and are not permitted to go into it without the permission of that student. Athletic equipment should be stored in athletic lockers.

Boundaries

Middle School playground areas are available to students during recess and lunch when an adult is present. All other outdoor areas are off limits to students at all times, except when accompanied by a teacher, staff member, or coach. Students are NOT permitted beyond the fences, in the wooded areas, the ravine, or in the drainage pipes.

Students should stay out of certain special areas unless they are supervised by an adult. Such areas include the Campus Center, snack bar, amphitheater, theater, gym,

laboratories, art and crafts studios, shop and music rooms, the Upper School, and all service and maintenance areas.

Middle School Standards of Dress

The Standards of Dress at Princeton Day School reflect both philosophical and practical considerations. They seek to recognize, balance, and respect an individual's need for self-expression and comfort during the school day with the acknowledgement that PDS is an educational institution and academic community of learning.

The Middle School standards of dress reflect a delineation between academics and play.

Specifically:

- Clothing tops must overlap with bottoms.
- All clothing must be opaque and completely cover skin on the stomach, waist, and back.
- All shorts and skirts must extend beyond the upper thigh.
- Undergarments must be completely covered by clothing.
- Shoes must be worn at all times.
- Hats must be removed inside classrooms and other indoor gathering spaces.
- All athletic special attire days ("psychs") must be approved at least 24 hours in advance by the Head Coach. Other special attire days must be approved at least 24 hours in advance by the Middle School Deans.
- Students may not wear pajama pants or ripped/distressed jeans.
- Clothing must be free of all messages that promote tobacco, alcohol or drug use, or messages that are demeaning to any group of people.

Lost and Found Items

Student belongings should be labeled with their names. Lost items can be reclaimed from the lost and found box in the Middle School lobby. Found money, jewelry, and other valuables can be reclaimed in the Middle School office. In December and June, unclaimed items are donated to charity. Please reinforce with your child the value of their personal items. While it is natural for Middle School children to lose things from

time to time, we need your help to reinforce with your child the importance of maintaining their own property.

Academic Integrity

We regard copying another student's work (or permitting her or his own to be copied by another student), talking with another student during a quiz or test, or reporting the contents of a test to someone who hasn't taken it yet as academic dishonesty.

Plagiarism, a serious and sometimes confusing form of academic dishonesty, is defined as submitting someone else's work as one's own. Thus, copying someone else's homework and handing it in with one's name on the page is plagiarism. Similarly, copying from a book or other publication, downloading from computer sources, and handing this work in without providing proper credit to the author is plagiarism. Plagiarism is discussed appropriately in all academic disciplines. Once students are educated on the forms of plagiarism, they also understand that it is prohibited, and disciplinary action may follow any acts of plagiarism in Middle School.

These are but a few examples of academic dishonesty. This issue is discussed as part of a student's ongoing education and students should always follow the "ask in advance" rule to stay out of trouble: If you are not sure if it is cheating or plagiarism, ask your teacher in advance.

Academic Probation

Students experiencing serious academic difficulty are usually placed on academic probation, and the school monitors progress closely in an effort to help facilitate improvement. Students experience much growth and change during the Middle School years. Some difficulties are to be expected, but a continued pattern of poor academic performance indicates the school and the student may not be a good match.

When a student continues on academic probation for more than one trimester, or is experiencing ongoing academic problems beyond the school's scope and capacity to serve the student, the school may take one of the following courses of action: 1) withhold the re-enrollment contract until the student's achievement improves or an

indicated set of recommendations is followed; or 2) exercise its right to rescind enrollment after a set of trimester grades is issued.

Grading

At the close of each semester teachers prepare written comments that include a teacher narrative and a two-part checklist. The first section of the checklist consists of items, such as class preparation and homework completion, designed to give the specific feedback that helps children learn how to become better students. The second section is similar, but contains items specific to each department, such as vocal fluency in language or computational accuracy in math.

Fifth and sixth grade students receive three levels of achievement grades:

Satisfactory (S) 100-80%

Needs Improvement (N) 79-70%

Unsatisfactory (U) 69% and Below

Parents are notified as soon as possible, usually in the form of a written interim/progress report, if the teacher notes that a student is experiencing a significant decline in academic performance or the teacher expects that a student will receive a Needs Improvement or Unsatisfactory grade. When a fifth or sixth grade student receives two or more Unsatisfactory grades during a given trimester, it is viewed as an indication that the overall quality of the student's work is insufficient, and the student may be placed on academic probation depending on the situation.

Seventh and eighth grade students receive the traditional letter achievement grades as follows:

A+ 98-100%

A 93-97%

A- 90-92%

B+ 87-89%

B 83-86%

B- 80-82%

C+ 77-79%

C 73-76%
C- 70-72%
D+ 67-69%
D 63-66%
D- 60-62%
F 0-59%

Parents are notified as soon as possible, usually in the form of a written progress report, if the teacher notes that a student is experiencing a significant decline in academic performance or the teacher expects that a student will receive an overall grade below 80%. When a seventh or eighth grade student receives two grades of D+, D, or D-, or one grade of F during a given trimester, it is viewed as an indication that the overall quality of the student's work is insufficient, and the student is usually placed on academic probation.

Letters of Recommendation

Each year several Middle School teachers and advisors are asked to write letters of recommendation. Our students apply to summer programs, schools in other cities when their families relocate, local schools that they hope will be a better fit, and a variety of boarding schools - all require some sort of reference from us.

Students and parents sometimes worry about whom to ask, what type of letter will be written, and whether the documents will be received in time for the application process. The following guidelines help everyone navigate the process successfully.

Students should ask the teacher in person well in advance of the due date. A well written and thoughtful letter takes time to create. For school applications, the Middle School generally sends out letters and transcripts the first week after winter break.

In the rare circumstance that the teacher is not comfortable writing a positive recommendation, he or she will say so. If the teacher's opinion is such that he or she can't describe a student in an honest and positive way, all parties are better served if he or she politely declines.

Letters of recommendation are written on PDS letterhead, signed, sealed, and have a signature across the flap or are submitted electronically. All letters are mailed directly to the school by the writer or given to the PDS registrar to be mailed with the transcript. Students or parents are not given letters to mail themselves. For electronic recommendation forms, it is the family's responsibility to ensure that the recommender has the information required to complete all online forms. While in rare circumstances a teacher may choose to share a copy of a recommendation with a student or parent, in general such recommendations are confidential documents. Teachers photocopy any forms they send and keep a copy of the letter.

Attendance

Each student is required to attend all Homeroom/Advisory periods and every activity to which she or he is scheduled including classes, resource periods, assemblies, athletic games and practices, and other activities as designated by the school.

Athletic/PE Attendance

Students are expected to attend their Physical Education classes, sports practices and athletic games as any other class. Students will attend as a spectator even when they have forgotten equipment or have a minor illness or injury unless they have a written medical exemption from a medical practitioner. If a child has a medical exemption they are required to resume play upon expiration.

For safety and accountability, coaches need to verify the attendance of each athlete, and this attendance record is monitored. Unexcused absences from PE and/or athletics unaccompanied with a written note are considered cutting class and will be accompanied by appropriate consequences in conversation with the deans.

Late Policy

Education at Princeton Day School takes place in homeroom, in advisory, in the classrooms, in assemblies, and in discussions with teachers and classmates. As a result, we believe that students must be in school in order to be a contributing member of our community of learners and to benefit completely from the school's educational experience. It is thus expected that all Middle School students be in school for the duration of the academic day (Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 3:20 p.m.) The

school expects parents to take responsibility for ensuring their child comes to school, and arrives on time.

Students who are late more than five times in a month to Homeroom/Advisory, class, or resource will have a consequence.

First time: the student will receive a warning and have a conversation with the advisor.

Second time: a repeat offender will receive a detention and the advisor will call home.

Third time: the student will receive a detention and the Dean will call home. This detention may be in the form of a Saturday detention from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

Students who are habitually late will receive additional consequences which may include meetings with parents and the Head of Middle School. The number of times a student is late or absent during the school year appears in their student record.

Students must not leave campus prior to the regular dismissal time without submitting the written consent of a parent to the Middle School office. When a written note is not possible, parents may telephone the Middle School office to give permission. In either case, students who have permission to leave school early must sign out in the Middle School office prior to their departure. Keeping track of our students is vital in the case of an emergency. Students who report to school late (after 8 a.m.) must sign in at the Middle School office upon arrival. Please help us by carefully following permission and sign-in/sign-out procedures.

Absences

Students should present a written explanation from a parent, well in advance of a planned absence. Please do not plan to travel on the last day before or after a school holiday, or on a regularly scheduled school day.

When a student is absent for any reason, the parents should advise the school by telephone as early as possible and indicate the probable length of the absence. After an absence from school for one or more days without advance permission, the student must present a note to the Middle School office, signed by parent or guardian, explaining the absence to the office.

When a student is absent for a period of five or more consecutive days without advance permission, the student must present a signed excuse from a doctor to the Health Office. Students who report to school after homeroom must sign in at the Middle School office upon arrival.

Assignment Notebook

In order to help organize his or her work, each 5th grade student is expected to maintain a designated PDS Middle School assignment notebook. Students in grades 6-8 are permitted the option to maintain assignments either on an iPad or in the designated assignment notebook. Parents are encouraged to have conversations with their child to understand the nature of daily assignments and dates due.

Homework

When students conscientiously complete their homework, they are learning important skills, as well as increasing their knowledge of the assigned subject matter. In the Middle School, teachers prepare assignments that relate directly to class work and extend students' learning beyond the classroom. These assignments require that students become independent learners, thereby developing self-discipline and responsibility.

The challenges of homework raise the issue of parent involvement. Parents can help guide their child toward good study habits. Students are responsible for understanding their assignments and for transporting their materials to their home and back to school. Students must manage their time and learn how to schedule their evenings so they can complete all their assignments. They must also develop high expectations for the quality of their work.

Each school year, from fifth to eighth grade, parents should become less involved with homework. While fifth grade parents might help by pointing out general principles or by giving illustrations, parents of eighth graders should encourage independent learning. Homework need not be a source of conflict in the home. We believe that ownership of homework must rest with the student, thus fostering a pride in learning.

Independent study helps students develop their own style of learning. Parents can encourage their children to try different learning environments to find optimal conditions for studying at home. Parents can help students determine what works best by being aware of their child's life at home and at school, asking questions, discussing school events, and listening to their child with care. We encourage parents to monitor iPad use at home. Generally, using electronics in an open, common area is best practice.

In general, the expectations for homework duration range from one and a half to two hours each night for fifth and sixth graders and approximately 20-30 minutes per night in each subject for seventh and eighth graders. However, homework may not be assigned in every subject each night, and assignments of several days' duration may be given for which students will need to budget time and plan accordingly. Students are urged to use their Middle School assignment notebooks to record assignments and to use resource time efficiently.

All assignments for each course are posted to the school's learning management system, Schoology. In the event of a prolonged absence, a student should make the necessary arrangements to stay current with homework through her or his advisor. Thanksgiving recess, Winter Vacation, and Spring Break, Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, and the Good Friday/Easter weekend are no-homework holidays for Middle School students.

Several religious traditions are followed among our diverse student body. Therefore, at various times during the year, students may be absent from school to celebrate religious holidays which may prohibit them from doing schoolwork. Teachers are asked to be sensitive to this reality when assigning homework, setting deadlines, and scheduling papers, quizzes and tests. This information is posted on the monthly calendar located outside the Middle School office and students are encouraged to check it regularly.

Reports

The year is divided into semesters; students receive mid-semester grades in October and teacher comments in late January, mid-semester grades in April, and teacher and advisor comments in mid-June. Interim/progress reports present an important

opportunity to reflect upon your daughter's or son's efforts, achievements, strengths, and areas for improvement. They may be written by a teacher at any time.

Teachers monitor student progress through various means, including written and oral reports, tests, quizzes, class participation, homework, and one-on-one discussions. These assessments show teachers what students know and what they still need to improve. Skillful and supportive feedback from teachers helps students to fulfill their potential.

Parents have a vital role in the assessment process, as well. Grades and comments are not judgments of a person's academic capability, future prospects, or character. They are relative descriptions of a student's classroom performance during a particular time period. With thoughtful praise and unconditional support, parents can lend meaningful perspective, inspiration, support, and power to assessment. We wish achievements to be celebrated but not seen as fulfilled expectations and difficulties to be seen as opportunities for growth rather than as failures.