



August 27, 2024

Dear Sixth Grade Parents and Guardians,

Happy end of summer and welcome to the start of your child's 6th grade year! I look forward to working with you, and supporting your child and you, throughout the school year. We have 19 new families joining the class this year -- a special welcome to the community to you all!

While almost all the information you need about what is going on at school can be found on our website, experience (both as a dean and as a D-E parent myself) has taught me it can be helpful to have a grade-specific, timely "heads up" now and then in our busy lives. So, periodically throughout the year, I plan to send you these "quick update" notes with some dates of interest, goings on you may want to discuss with your child "around the dinner table", and a short list of reminders or links relevant to the moment. I hope you find this a useful path into the myriad happenings and resources at D-E.

Dates of Interest

- **August 29th** -- Advisory groups assigned. Look for an email on Thursday evening to your child from your child's new advisor. (Advisory groups are not the same as class groups. Students will learn about class groupings for math, English, history and science at student orientation-- on the first day of school-- when they receive their schedules from their advisors.)
- **Sept. 3rd** -- Student Orientation: A full day of activities, 8:10-3:25 (drop off for students arriving by car recommended at 8:00.) More information below.
- **Sept. 9th**, 6:30pm -- Parent Orientation for **all** 6th grade parents with me (plus parents of 7th and 8th graders new to the school.) Look for a future e-invite from the middle school office with more details.
- **Sept. 9th**, after school -- fall sports try-outs/practices begin. Look for an email from the athletics department with a link for pre-season sign-ups, and see the athletic page of the website for details. (Prior to this day there will be an in-school assembly during which fall clubs, sports and coaches are introduced to students.)
- **Sept. 16th** -- MS Picture Day
- **Sept. 19, 6:30pm** -- Back-to-School night on campus for parents. Meet your child's teachers! Look for a future e-invite from the middle school office with more details.
- **Sept. 26-27** -- Sixth Grade community-building overnight trip to Camp Mason. More information will be shared at parent orientation.

Around the Dinner Table

- **Orientation Day** -- This is a fun day to which I hope all the 6th graders are looking forward! No books, iPads or other materials are necessary. Students should dress comfortably and for the weather. Buildings are cool, but we will be moving around campus as students engage in activities to help them meet classmates and teachers, learn about their schedules, get comfortable with the campus, and start to build the 6th grade community. Be sure to clarify with your child when and where they will be picked up at the end of the day. Buses will run on their normal schedule, and drop-off in front of the middle

school building for kids in cars is recommended at 8:00am. Bear with the traffic as everyone is sorting themselves out -- we are all in it together! I will be waiting in front of the MS building, as will Mr. Davis and Mr. Samedy. Students new to the school, and their buddies, should meet me there. Students rising from D-E lower school can go directly to the Silberfein Gym if they know where it is. Sixth grade advisors will be in that gym and also at bus and drop-off locations around campus to greet students and help direct them.

- **iPad and “setting up for success”**-- By now everyone should have picked up a school iPad from the Taub Center and accessed the on-line tutorials to set it up for school use. Please also have another look at the iPad pre-orientation questions on page 28 of our [“Gateway to the 6th Grade” MS Online Orientation \(click here\)](#). My hope is that everyone has a chance to discuss, as a family, healthy parameters for making the iPad a “tool for school” rather than a distraction. Other ways to set up for success include setting up a study space at home, getting back into a school-friendly sleep schedule, discussing home expectations for limits on use of devices and screen time, and reinforcing skills for appropriate, kind, pro-community behaviors on any social media or electronic communications. (Once we are back in school, teachers will also review with students the guidelines for acceptable use of technology, so look out for a handout about that to come home with your child for a signature early in the year.)
- **Opening Assemblies** -- Students will have a division-wide community assembly at the end of the first day and will soon settle into a schedule that includes division-wide meetings or community building events twice a week as well as periodic grade-level class gatherings. You might like to ask what came up during these meetings -- announcements about fall clubs? The start of affinity group meetings? While you will be informed of any action-items via email or the periodic “Middle School Messages” push page from Mr. Davis, hearing from your child may give you advance notice as well as starting interesting dinner-table conversation.

Reminders

- **Attendance** -- Mrs. Jones is our attendance coordinator for middle school. You can reach her at MSattendance@d-e.org or 201-227-3301. Please let her know if your child will be dropped off late, picked up early or unexpectedly absent. If you are planning an absence in advance, please copy her on your e-mail to me.
- **MS Office/Day-Of Communications** -- Our office manager is Ms. Cebulski. You can reach her at 201-227-3230 or cebuld@d-e.org. She can help you get a message to your child should you have an unexpected, time-sensitive communication. While easy and tempting to do, please do NOT contact your child by text message during the school day. We will be working with students on how to manage their personal tech so it is not managing them. Asking them to stay off g-chat and to keep phones and apple watches off and stowed in Yondr pouches during the day is part of that project. You can help by communicating urgent messages through the school rather than via personal devices, and/or making it clear to your child that any texts you send are OK to look at after dismissal at 3:25. The teachers and I spend the day engaged with students and so often do not get to email and phone messages right away, so Ms. Cebulski also can help with other time-sensitive questions. When we go on field trips, I keep in touch with her, so she has information about our progress throughout the trip as well.
- **Books for school** can be ordered through our on-line partner bookseller “MBS” Direct. You should have received an email with information about how to use this resource. Please reach out to Joan Millien at millij@d-e.org with questions.
- **Admissions Buddies** -- If your child is the “buddy” for a newly admitted student, please remind her/him to look for Mr. Samedy’s email about greeting their buddy at orientation. We want to be sure new students are comfortable upon arrival. Their buddies can help by greeting them as they arrive and

escorting them to the “grove” outside the MS building (or on the 6th grade front porch in case of rain) where I will be waiting for them.

- **Summer Reading and Math** -- All students have summer assignments that should be completed this weekend. It is not necessary to bring books, etc. to school on orientation day, but it is a good idea to have the work out of the way.
- **Magnus and Start of School links** on your parent portal provide other “to do” items for parents. Be sure to contact the D-E Technology Department at help@d-e.org if you have not been able to log into the D-E website and access your parent portal.

I hope the above is useful as you head into the final days of summer. Of course, my lists will not be comprehensive, so be sure to open any emails from our Parents’ Association representatives, the Middle School Principal, Mr. Davis, or the associate athletics director to stay fully “in the know.” You also can call me at 201-227-3237 with any specific questions -- or feedback on what to include in these missives.

Have a happy long weekend!

Tasha Urbanowski
6th Grade Dean
MS/US Garden Coordinator

