



MS 6th Grade Dean Update



Left to right: Matthew Schade, 7th Grade Dean; Ali Miller, 8th Grade Dean; Jonathan Davis, MS Principal; Tasha Urbanowski, 6th Grade Dean

Dear Sixth Grade Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to the start of your child's 6th grade year! We have 20 new families joining the class this year -- a special welcome to the community to you all -- but almost everyone is new to the middle school itself. I am here to help with your questions and any concerns as we move through the year together.

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 DE parent myself) has taught me it can be useful 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 path into the myriad happenings and resources at D-E, but, please feel free to reach out to me at any point. I look forward to working with you and supporting your child, and you, throughout the months ahead.

Dates of Interest

- **September 2**-- Advisory groups assigned. Look for an email on Wednesday afternoon 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 when they receive their schedules from their advisors.)
- **Sept. 8** -- Student Orientation: A full day of activities, 8:10-3:25 (drop off for folks in cars recommended at 8:00). More information below.
- **Sept. 14**, 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.
- **Sept. 15** -- Back-to-School night on campus for parents only. Meet your child's teachers! Look for an upcoming e-mail invitation from the middle school office with more details.
- **Sept. 16** -- Picture Day. We capture headshots for student IDs and the yearbook. If you want copies, you may purchase these from the photographer. More information to follow soon.
- **Sept. 21** -- No School, Yom Kippur
- **Sept 22-25** -- Sixth Grade "BRIDGE" Week on campus during the regular school day. Look for an email from Mrs. M-M, 6th Grade STEAM Coordinator, with details closer to the date. The 6th grade will go on two class trips during this week, but we will be back in time for regular dismissal every day.
- **Sept. 28**, 6:30pm -- Fall Parent Orientation. Look out for an upcoming e-mail invitation to this important in-person event.
- **October 9** -- No School, Teachers' Professional Day.
- **Oct. 12** -- No School, Indigenous Peoples' Day.
- **Oct. 14**, 8:30-10:00am -- 6th Grade Fall Parent Forum on campus. Connect with other 6th grade parents and hear from the MS Librarian, MS Counselor, and MS Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, who will introduce themselves and share about programming they deliver and their work with sixth grade. Look out for an e-mailed invitation. I will host the gathering along with our class Parents' Association Representatives.

Around the Dinner Table

- **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](#) from the spring parent orientation handout. 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.

- **Orientation Day** -- This is a fun day to which I hope all 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 drop-off locations to greet students and help direct them.

Reminders

- **Attendance** -- Mrs. Jones is our attendance coordinator for middle school. You can reach her at MSattendance@d-e.org. Please let her know -- all year-- if your child will be dropped off late, picked up early or unexpectedly absent by filling out the form on your SCHOOL PASS app or, if that is not possible, reaching out to her directly. **If you are planning an absence in advance, please email ME at least a week before the absence, and copy her on that e-mail.**
- **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 or email 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 keep phones off and stowed during the day is part of that project. You can help by communicating urgent messages through the school rather than via cell, 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 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.
- **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 new-student circle on 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 week! 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 tech services 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 look ahead to our opening days of school. 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 final weekend of the summer!

Tasha Urbanowski
6th Grade Dean
MS/US Garden Manager