

Dear Middle School Parents,

Welcome to the start of a wonderful school year. If this is your first experience with middle school, you are in for an incredible journey as you watch your child experience the roller coaster ride known as the "middle school years!" We call it that because this is a time of unpredictable highs and lows. Your child may be funny, inquisitive, or thoughtful one minute, and sad or apathetic the next. You will see numerous and significant changes over the next three years.

Making a good middle school adjustment is especially crucial. Middle school students learn *how to learn* by building on a foundation of reading, writing and mathematical skills. During the middle school years, students are taught to think through problems and solve them. They also learn to take responsibility for their own school assignments and to work in teams with other students.

Quality education now will be the key to obtaining superior jobs over the next two decades. In order to be successful in the years to come, today's middle school students will need to know how to use technology and how to solve problems we haven't even yet considered. It does not matter what occupation these children choose; they will need to understand and use much more complicated tools than we currently do.

For those of you who will be making your first contact with middle school, you may find the process difficult. Adjusting to the difference between a smaller, more family-style elementary school to a larger more student-independent middle school can be a tough job. Your child will have more teachers, each teacher will be assigned many more students, and the daily schedule is more complicated than the one in elementary school. Please know that our staff and faculty are acutely aware of the challenges you will be facing and want to be sensitive to your needs as well as your student's needs. We are here to work along side of you to ensure your student has the support and encouragement needed during these transitional years.

I hope that the information found in this packet will be of great value in helping you understand how Providence Middle School is structured and what you can expect. My desire is that we can build a relationship based on the common goal of a positive middle school experience for your child. I look forward to working with you and your student next year.

With thoughts of blessings,

Kimberly D. Stidham  
Middle School Principal

## **Communication with the School**

Providence School uses e-spirit as our primary means of communication with parents regarding basic announcements and information. Please visit our web site ([www.prov.org](http://www.prov.org)) and click on the bottom right hand side link that says “sign up for or modify your e-spirit subscription”. Enter your email address and choose which department(s) you wish to receive information from. It is that simple!

## **Summer Work**

All students are required to complete summer work. Two months without math makes it hard for students to remember basic computational skills. For that reason, all middle school students are required to complete a summer math packet. The work contained in the packet is reflective of concepts taught in the grade he/she just completed and contains no new concepts. Your student will turn these packets in to his/her teacher at the start of the school year and will be tested over the material within the first week or so of school.

## **Attendance and Tardies**

Regular school attendance is the basis for good grades. For this reason, Providence School allows students ten excused absences each semester. Students who are absent can never gain the full educational experience of the classroom by simply doing makeup work so we strongly urge students to be in class unless an illness or family emergency prevents them from doing so.

Tardies cause two problems. Your child misses part of the class and the late entrance distracts the whole group. Please help your child be in attendance and learn the discipline of promptness.

## **School Calendar and Half Days**

There are several half days on our school calendar. For your convenience, the upper school will offer a supervised study hall for parents who are unable to pick their children up at noon. The study hall will be held from noon until the regular 3:15 dismissal time. Your student will need to bring a bag lunch and beverage as the cafeteria is not open for lunch on these days. We would also request that you RSVP to the front office in advance if you are planning to have your children in the study hall so that we can arrange for adequate supervision.

## **Teams and their policies**

Each team has a set of written policies that are consistent among every core teacher (English, math, science, social studies, and Bible). At every grade level these requirements become more challenging as we recognize the formidable task of building the bridge from elementary to high school. You can be

confident that these policies are well researched and time tested to ensure every grade level expectation can be met without difficulty.

## Net Classroom and Grade Level Web Sites

Net Classroom is a great way for parents to monitor their child's progress and assignments. Using *Netclassroom*, Providence School makes progress reports available online **every two weeks**. You will be sent instructions for setting up your password and for viewing procedures when school begins. The reports will be available on Friday afternoons and will close for viewing on Monday afternoons. Please remember that many grades are given every nine weeks. One assignment can change the complexion of the progress report but have little impact on the report card. Parents who have concerns that require grade information more often than every two weeks should contact the middle school guidance counselor. This site also contains the weekly lesson plans and assignments. Worksheets, informational packets, and review sheets may

Please understand that the assignments posted on the web are subject to change. The level of understanding in the classroom varies from day to day and may necessitate the teacher postponing or modifying an assignment. These changes will be on the board in the classroom and should be noted by your student in his/her planner.

Each team has a web site that contains important information such as field study information and social events. These pages can be found by visiting [www.prov.org](http://www.prov.org) and selecting the middle school tab. By choosing student life and the appropriate grade level, this information will be available for your planning.

## Lockers

Students will receive their locker assignments at orientation. They should bring all of their books and a locker shelf. The vinyl coated 12" stand alone locker shelf is the only one we have found that does not hinder the operation of the locking mechanism. (Office Max carries a large stock of these types of locker shelves.) Advisors will give students a demonstration of the proper way to organize their books and folders in the lockers to prevent the lock from jamming.

In an effort to reduce crowding in the hallways, middle school students will be on a rotation schedule for locker use.

P.E. lockers will be assigned in physical education classes. Students will need to bring a combination lock for their P.E. locker. While we would like to think that everyone on our campus operates with exemplary moral conduct, occasionally items do disappear. Usually these are electronic items and money. With the number of students changing in the locker room at one time, it is imperative that students place all of their personal items in their assigned locker and secure the locker. It is not unusual for students to inadvertently leave a pair of pants, a shirt, or shoes on the floor of the locker room and have the item

taken by another student since everyone wears the same basic uniform. This is usually an innocent mistake but can be a costly one. Please encourage your student to make sure all personal items, including clothing, go into the locker.

## **Homework**

Our picture of ideal family life seems to include parents helping their children with homework. It is a rare parent who can step into the middle of a difficult algebraic problem and explain how to solve it. It is one thing to quiz your child on spelling words or state capitals and quite another to become an associate teacher. This is not recommended. In fact, many parents, social workers and psychologists agree that conflict over homework is one of the most frequent causes of family arguments.

Providence Middle School has a unique advantage over stand alone middle schools. Because we have the high school under our same roof, we use vertical teaming to determine the objectives that must be met for each grade level class. We also employ the same techniques at every grade level. For example, when our middle school math classes are taught to factor, they use the same method that will be employed through AP Calculus. While you may know an “easier way,” we strongly caution you against this idea. Of course, it is impossible to re-teach parents who are trying to help their child but do not have the luxury of sitting in the classroom. For this reason, we offer helps classes (see below) as a way for your student to get the extra instruction he/she may need.

## **Helps classes**

Helps classes are usually available from individual teachers four mornings a week (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday) except the third Wednesday of every month. The only exception is when a periodic faculty meeting is scheduled. Students will be given advanced notice when this occurs. Individual appointments are also available in the afternoon.

Students who arrive for helps will be permitted to come upstairs at the ringing of the 7:35 bell. Students should be in the classroom prepared for helps by the 7:40 bell. Students who arrive after the 7:40 bell will not be allowed to enter the classroom. (Please understand that there has to be a “start” time. Students coming in and out of the room, locker doors slamming, and students chatting in the hall are a hindrance to the learning process.) Students may not come to helps to observe. Instead, they must come to helps class prepared with a specific question regarding the material covered over the last five school days.

## **Field Studies**

There is much to be learned outside of the school building. Each middle school team participates in at least two field studies per year. (These excursions may be on campus but not in the classroom.) These field studies are interdisciplinary and academic in nature and occur on a regular school day. An assignment from each core class is attached to the field study. Unless a

student is under a doctor's care and cannot attend school (confirmed with a doctor's note), attendance is required. Students who are not under a doctor's care and do not attend the field study will receive zeros on the assignment in each class.

## **Discipline**

You are encouraged to review the code of conduct in the handbook found on the web site. School rules are not meant to be cumbersome but are enforced in order to maintain an environment conducive to learning. Dress code (including appropriate attire for dress down days) is also found in the handbook.

Because we make mistakes as adults, it would be preposterous to believe students will never miss the mark. Therefore, grace and mercy are applied in the classroom setting. However, once a student has received ample counsel from a teacher, the proper course of action is referral to the dean's office for the issuance of disciplinary consequences.

## **Parent Conferences**

Parents are encouraged to communicate with teachers via email. If a face-to-face meeting is desired, conferences may be scheduled by contacting your student's Advisor/Advisee teacher. Each team has a planning period during the school day where time is set aside for the entire team or an individual teacher to meet with you.

## **Parents in the halls**

Unfortunately, the day and time in which we live make an open school a dangerous one. Because your child's safety is of the utmost importance to us, we do not allow anyone but faculty and staff in the school corridors and classrooms. Each person who works at Providence School and New Life Christian Fellowship has been fingerprinted and put through a complete background check. With over a thousand students, there is no way we can identify every parent and family member. Therefore, we must ask that parents enter the front office to sign in and refrain from being in the halls without a visitor's badge. Please do not be offended if you are stopped in the hall! We are trying to maintain a secure environment for all of our students.

## **Drop-Ins for Extended Day**

Students who are on campus unsupervised after 3:00 will be taken to extended day and the parents will be charged the drop-in rate of \$20.00. Please make sure your student is picked up on time!!!

## Student Identification Badges

Students will receive their identification badges before or on the first day of school. They are required to wear their badges every day. The school will provide the initial lanyard and badge, but there will be a replacement cost. (Please see Student-Parent Handbook online for more information.)

## Relationships

There is a misnomer that parents don't need to be as involved when their child enters middle school. The exact opposite is true. This is a crucial time and no matter how isolated your child may want to be from you, continue to insist they spend time with you both at school, church, family, and neighboring activities. You are welcome and encouraged to become an active participant in our school even though it will be in different ways than elementary.

Middle school years tend to be the season of life where we get our first experience in navigating social situations. It is very normal for your middle school child to be more concerned with their peers' opinions than yours. Don't be dismayed! Continue to talk to your middle school student even if it seems what you say falls on deaf ears. (They really are listening!) Meet your child's friends and other middle school parents. Encourage healthy friendships and help guide them in their choices.

It is my desire that our children develop and maintain wholesome, biblical attitudes toward the opposite sex. Starting boy-girl relationships on the middle school level is a hindrance to this goal and we do not want children to face the stress and pressures that accompany premature relationships with the opposite sex. Please help us to establish appropriate boundaries with regards to these relationships.

## Other basic information

- ☞ Students must have their lunch card or cash to purchase food in the cafeteria. There is no monitor to oversee what your child purchases for lunch each day so please talk with your child his/her dietary choices.
- ☞ Neither backpacks (including purses that look like backpacks) nor oversized purses (large enough to contain a book) are allowed. These items should be left in the lockers!
- ☞ **Any faculty member who sees or hears an electronic device will confiscate the item and the student will be issued a Saturday school.**
- ☞ Skirts are measured from the top of the hip bone to 4" from the ground when on a kneeling knee. When having skirts hemmed, please make sure the top of the skirt is in the proper place.
- ☞ Boys must wear dress shoes. Suede tennis shoes are not appropriate.

## **If there is a problem, whom do I call?**

Providence School operates according to Matthew 18:15 -16 which says, "If your fellow believer sins against you, go and tell him in private what he did wrong. If he listens to you, you have helped that person to be your brother or sister again. But if he refuses to listen, go to him again and take one or two other people with you. Every case may be proved by two or three witnesses."

If you meet with the teacher(s) and do not feel the situation has been resolved, a meeting with the teacher(s) and guidance counselor should be scheduled. If there still is no resolution, the Principal of the Middle School will become involved.