

Unit One Middle School Memo

The theme for our first unit in Middle School is Origins...or beginnings. As we begin our school year, it's interesting to reflect on how each of us approaches new experiences. Are we excited? fearful? A little of both? What possibilities are unleashed when new things begin?

Here are some notes to help parents with this year's beginning in Middle School.

Important Unit One Dates:

Sept. 17: Eighth year high school placement meeting

Sept. 25-26: Hero's Journey retreat

Oct. 3-4: First Middle School camping trip (optional)

Oct. 10: New Parent Visiting Day

Oct. 13: Columbus Day: no school

Oct. 17: End of Unit I

Oct. 20-24: Outdoor Education Trip

Our Schedule: It is important for Middle School students to have time in the morning to greet friends and get ready for the day. Classes begin promptly at 8:30. We therefore ask Middle School students to be dropped off at 8:15. It's unsettling to both students and teachers when students arrive late.

Academics: We expect sixth year students to spend one and a half hours and seventh and eighth year students to spend two hours on schoolwork each night (five nights per week). As parents, you can help by making sure there is time set aside for this. If your child is spending more time than this, please let us know. We don't want that! We do find, however, that at the beginning of the year, things can take longer. We seem to become more efficient when we get back into the swing of things.

Sports: As most of you know, soccer meets three times a week after school and Outdoor Club meets once a week. Participation in after school sports offers an opportunity for your child to run and play with others, to explore the outdoors and to get some healthy exercise. We encourage everyone's participation. Please speak to Erik Hawvermale if you have any questions about soccer, and to Tom Fahsbender if you have questions about Outdoor Club.

Chorus and Band: Our Middle School Chorus, this year run by Kate Zimmerman and Laura Hutchins, meets during the school day, on Wednesdays from 9:50-10:30. Joe Bouchard runs the Middle School band, which meets after school on Tuesdays from 3:30-4:30. There are two Band and Chorus concerts during the school year, on January 29 and May 28.

Outdoor Education: At the end of Unit I, Middle School students and teachers will travel to Camp Hazen in Chester, CT for our annual Outdoor Education trip. All parents should have forms by now...and these should be filled out and returned to Erik

Hawvermale. Eighth year students will leave on Monday, Oct. 20th and sixth and seventh year students will leave on Tuesday, October 21st. Please note that WMS does not have school on Friday, October 24th. The Middle School will return from Outdoor Ed. the afternoon of Oct. 24th at 3:15. Please speak to Sheila or Erik if you have any questions or concerns about this trip.

Snack: As most of you know, we have changed our Middle School snack policy. We continue to believe in the importance of a healthy mid-morning snack for students this age, but we now ask that you take care of your own child's snack rather than provide for the group. It seems simpler for everyone involved.

Hero's Journey: Our Hero's Journey program gets kicked off with a retreat for the seventh year class on September 25 and 26th. During the retreat, the class will hike to the top of Bear Mountain, work on a farm project together and camp at Macedonia State Park. Theo Grayson is the person in charge. Helping Theo with the retreat are Carol Williams, Jared Russell, Amy Hughes and Kerry Dorton. Most families find the Hero's Journey program to be a wonderful experience for seventh year students. Information about the Hero's Journey program was passed out at Back to School night and put into parent mailboxes for families who did not attend. Attendance at Hero's Journey activities is mandatory. Please speak to Theo if you have any questions about the program.

Middle School Camping: Understanding the importance of time spent outdoors for students this age, Tom Fahsbender and Erik Hawvermale offer three Middle School camping trips during the school year. These trips are optional, and a whole lot of fun! Camping groups leave WMS on Friday afternoon and return at about noon on Saturday. The first trip will take place from October 3-4th. Tom will send home more specific information with students who are interested.

New Parent Visiting Day: This year we are inviting parents new to Middle School to visit classes on Friday, October 10th. We welcome you to observe in your child's classroom during the morning (10:00-12:30) and then join teachers for a potluck lunch in Sheila's room from 12:45-1:45. We thought this would offer a good opportunity to see Middle School in action and then get any questions answered that you might have. Email Sheila (scoadbernard@washingtonmontessor.org) or drop a note in her box letting her know if you plan to attend.