COLORADO ACADEMY

2019-2020

To CA Middle School Parents and Students:

This supplement is intended to be a companion to the larger Colorado Academy Student/Parent Handbook. While the Handbook provides detailed information about school policies and procedures, this Handbook Supplement is intended to provide additional information about other aspects of the Middle School experience. If parents cannot find the information they need in either the Student/Parent Handbook or this Supplement, please contact your child’s advisor, the Middle School Administrative Assistant, Fran Clark; or Middle School Principal Bill Wolf-Tinsman; we are happy to help.
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Overview:

The Colorado Academy Middle School faculty and staff strive to provide students with a solid foundation of knowledge and skills, to promote students’ personal growth, and to encourage and build characteristics that include: courage, kindness, inclusivity, responsibility, grit, and gratitude. We do so in a supportive and nurturing environment in which excellence is valued and promoted.

CA’s Middle School program reflects the unique nature of early adolescents. We work to develop the whole individual; students are encouraged to discover their passions and strengths through academic, artistic, and athletic instruction. We foster creativity and creative thinking and problem solving. Students are prepared for high school by learning how to study and think effectively, efficiently, and independently.

During their years in Middle School, students are presented with intellectual and personal challenges that require of them increasing independence and responsibility. The Colorado Academy Middle School experience is intended to help each student develop intellectual curiosity, an enjoyment of learning, and the pride of achieving.

Topics:

All-School Communication

We encourage you to log into the CA website to find information that pertains specifically to you and your child, as well as your child’s class and division. Classroom teachers often post information, photos, and news on their classroom web pages. By checking the website each week, you will find updates posted by the Head of School, division principals, the Parent Association, and more. Also, news stories and photographs from Colorado Academy are posted frequently and can be found in CA’s online newsroom under the NEWS tab on the home page of the website or by going to news.coloradoacademy.org.

In addition, CA utilizes social media platforms for more frequent communication (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest).
All-school communication comes directly to your email box each Friday morning with CA Today, a weekly electronic newsletter designed to help you prepare for the week ahead. Each month, the online school newsletter, On CAmpus, is published and delivered to you via email. And twice each year, you will receive CA’s magazine, the CA Journal, which features alumni information, financial reports, and news.

Assemblies

Periodically, students attend assemblies on various topics. Some are all-school assemblies; some are specifically designed for Middle School students. The assembly program allows us to share information on important topics as well as to bring the school community closer together. The assembly schedule and topics vary from year to year.

Athletics/Sports - Gym Clothes

All students are required to wear black shorts, a grey shirt, and athletic shoes to gym or sports class. These clothes (with the exception of shoes) may be purchased at the CA Bookstore or elsewhere. The dress code applies to gym clothing.

Athletics/Sports - Photos

Each trimester, the Athletic Department staff schedules a professional photographer to photograph all student-athletes. All Seventh and Eighth Grade students participating in a team sport have their photo taken during their team practice. Both individual and team photos are taken. The Athletic Department sends an email notifying parents when the photos may be viewed on a secure website. The email contains a password allowing access to the website. The photos may be purchased directly from the photographer’s website.
Athletics/Sports Schedules

Sixth Grade sports are incorporated into the school day. Students have the opportunity to participate in a variety of sports that rotate during the Spring and Fall seasons. They also often swim the first two and the last two weeks of the academic year. In each season, students may choose to participate in a mini-sport season, complete with after-school games. The MS Athletic Director, Elizabeth Drazdowski, sends out information each season to keep parents informed. Parents with questions related to athletics can always give Elizabeth a call at 303-914-2564 or send her an email at elizabeth.drazdowski@coloradoacademy.org.

Seventh and Eighth Grade sports practices occur during the last period of every day. Students choose among several sports in which they participate for an entire trimester. The choices are different each trimester, providing students with exposure to a variety of athletic experiences. Competitive sports usually involve one to two after-school games per week, in addition to the in-school daily practice. Non-competitive sports do not involve after-school time commitments.

Athletics/Sports Trainer on Staff

CA has an athletic trainer on staff to assist students who incur injuries during CA sporting activities or PE. Students may visit the trainer with an instructor’s permission.

Athletics/Transportation to and from Athletic Events

The school provides student transportation to and from sporting events. If parents need to transport a student to an event, a request for permission must be sent to the coach. Similarly, for safety reasons, if parents would like to give permission to have their child ride home with another parent, a note must be sent to the coach.

Back-to-School Picnic

The Back-to-School Picnic is held on the day before school starts. Families of all grade levels are invited to attend. The picnic is for parents, students,
and siblings. The picnic is held on campus, and CA provides the dinner. This is a great opportunity to meet other families and students before the school year begins. Picnic information and invitations are sent electronically by the school in early August. There is no formal program on this evening; it is simply a chance for the community to reunite before the school year begins.

**Back-to-School Night**

Early in the year, the MS hosts Back-to-School Night, an evening for parents to get to know teachers and hear more about our curriculum. The night begins in the Dining Hall and then continues in the Middle School. More specific information about timing and program is sent to families in advance of the evening. This is one of the most important events on the calendar. Please make every effort to attend.

**Bicycles**

Students are welcome to ride their bicycles to school. All bicycles must remain in the bicycle racks during the school day; helmets may be stored inside the MS building. Bike racks are located near the Lower School entrance.

**Birthday Snacks**

Special birthday snacks are allowed only during the student’s advisory time. The following rules will apply:

- Parents must call or email the advisor prior to the birthday to discuss arrangements.
- Appropriate treats consist **only** of cake, cupcakes, cookies, brownies, bagels, or other baked goods.
- Treats must **NOT contain** nuts
- Make sure you include plates, napkins, and eating utensils.
- **Items requiring refrigeration or a cooler are not allowed.**
- Drinks are **not** allowed.
- All trash must be picked up and the room vacuumed.
Captains Council

Captains Council is a leadership opportunity for Seventh and Eighth Grade students in their selected sports. Students are encouraged to complete an application if they aspire to be a team captain. Each team has two captains each season. Team members select one captain, and coaches select the other. Students chosen to serve as captains attend Captains Council meetings during the season to develop their leadership skills. Coaches disseminate information at the beginning of each trimester about this program. Captains Council is one of a number of leadership development opportunities available in the Middle School.

Character Progress

In addition to grades outlined in the handbook, each trimester parents receive an update on how children are progressing toward character-trait goals in courage, responsibility, grit, kindness, inclusivity, and gratefulness. Children either receive a “P,” for progressing, or a “W,” indicating that this is an area that the teachers are working with the child to improve. Children receiving a W for any one of the six behaviors will: 1) meet with their advisor to create an improvement plan, and 2) meet with the principal to discuss progress toward this goal at the subsequent mid-tri. Should a child receive a second W, he or she must meet with the school principal and create an improvement plan, which shall be signed by the parents, principal, and child. Failure to improve after receiving two W’s may put the child's continuation at CA at risk.

Class Placement

Our faculty and principals put significant thought and effort into placing students into classes or advisory sections. We consider a variety of factors as we place your child. Factors include, but are not limited to, gender, social, emotional, academic, and behavioral needs. Placement for some Middle School courses is based on placement tests and other performance-related criteria. Parent requests for specific teachers are discouraged. Decisions made by teachers and school administrators are final.
Clubs

Student- and faculty-sponsored clubs are offered on a once-per-six-day cycle during dedicated class time for a portion of the school year. Clubs can be offered either by faculty or by staff. All student-sponsored clubs must have a faculty member sponsor and be approved by the principal. There will be two club sessions each year. Participation in clubs is optional. Students who choose not to participate have a mandatory study hall.

Communication Between Home and School

Teachers and administrators strive to keep parents appropriately up to date on what is happening in the Middle School. That said, one of our goals for Middle School-age children is to help them develop increased personal responsibility. This means that our first move will be to work with the child and then, if necessary or appropriate, include the parent in the conversation. Should something happen at school that crosses a threshold of significance, we will certainly be in touch with parents so that we can work together.

- **Parent Association Meetings**: We have six or so MS Parent Association meetings during the year. Each meeting has time devoted to sharing PA news, as well as a featured speaker on a topic pertinent to Middle School age students. Dates and times of these meetings can be found on the school calendar.
- **Conferences**: See Conferences (page 11).
- **Open-Door Mornings**: Each trimester, the principal sets aside a morning for short meetings with any parent who would like to come in to chat.
- **Advisor Phone Calls**: During the first two weeks of the school year, advisors will contact parents. This is a “get to know one another” call and provides parents with a chance to share their hopes for the school year.
- **Back-to-School Night**: See Back-to-School-Night (page 8).
- **Mid-Tri Reports**: At the middle of each trimester, parents are electronically sent an update on current achievement in each class.
The achievement grade is accompanied by a brief comment if a child is earning less than a “C.”

- **End of Trimester Reports:** At the end of the first and third trimester, parents are electronically sent grades and narrative comments for each subject area. At the end of the second trimester, parents receive final grades for the term. Students who earn a “C” or below in the second trimester also receive a brief narrative comment. We do not send full narrative comments at the end of the second trimester, because parents have the chance to meet and discuss progress with each teacher during March Conferences.

- **Routine and Periodic Communication:** Teachers and administrators communicate with parents on an as-needed basis. As mentioned, our first communication will appropriately be with the child in most circumstances.

- **Parent Communication with Teachers:** As needed, parents can be in touch with teachers and administrators by email (preferred) or by using the school phone extension. We do our very best to be back in touch within 24 hours. In a true emergency, parents may contact a teacher or administrator by phone at home.

**Conferences**

In addition to the information noted in the Student/Parent Handbook, this information may be helpful. Teachers and advisors work from the standpoint that cooperating and collaborating with parents helps each child achieve success consistent with the mission of the school. Parent/Teacher conferences provide an opportunity for parents to have a dialogue with teachers, and the goal is to provide useful feedback about a student’s performance, and, if necessary, to devise a plan that will improve student performance. Below are our expectations for these conferences so that the discussions are productive and helpful.

- Parents and teachers are working toward the same goal, and conferences provide each a chance to share observations and ideas and then work together toward a positive outcome. Listening and reflecting are as important as talking and describing.
• Take advantage of teachers’ perspectives. They have wisdom gleaned from having worked with, in some cases, well over a thousand different students. That’s quite a pool from which to draw experience.
• If your child is having difficulty in a class, the conference is an opportunity to work with the teacher to uncover the cause of the problem, which will often prove different from what one thought initially. Only by working together can teachers and parents achieve a good result, and it is important that a child know that the parents and teachers are collaborating.
• Remember that information you have received about a class through your child is always tinged with a child’s perspective.
• Teachers, also, will want to hear about how things are going at home. Your point of view is important.
• Conferences are also a time to acknowledge what is going well in class and at home.

Continuation

Eighth Grade Continuation is on the last day of school in the afternoon. Families of Eighth Graders are invited to attend. The Middle School faculty plans the event. After the ceremony, the school provides a reception for families. There is a photographer available to take family photographs. Boys are expected to wear a coat and tie; girls are expected to wear a dress or other formal wear that complies with the Middle School dress code. The event is a thoughtful and age-appropriate recognition of students’ achievement and growth during the Middle School years. The school will send out letters well in advance of Continuation to further explain student dress code and other details of the event.

Continuation Parties

The Parent Association organizes an entire-class gathering for Eighth Graders prior to Continuation. Details about this event will be sent out in a timely manner. Beyond Continuation and this entire-class party, we do not encourage additional celebrations beyond family gatherings.
Dress-Up Days

These are declared for certain special occasions. We ask that students wear “more formal attire” on these days. Dresses, ties, jackets...that sort of thing. Students do not have to wear dress shoes, although it is encouraged. Students are not allowed to call home for appropriate clothing. Dress-up days occur on Grandparents Day and the day the MS Musical is performed at a Red and White assembly.

Electronics and Inappropriate Items

Students are not allowed to have items at school that pose risks to themselves or others or will disrupt some aspect of the school day (e.g., skateboards, ‘heelys’, bikes, roller blades, snowboards, knives, firecrackers, matches, lighters, slingshots, water pistols, electronic games, etc.). If in doubt about whether something is allowed, we expect students to ask a teacher or the principal. Please exercise good judgment about such matters.

The school does not allow students to use mobile phones, electronic games, or music players at school between 7:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. without express permission from a teacher or the principal. While at school, we want our students’ focus to be on learning and each other, without the distraction of electronics. Devices brought to school should be securely put away in the student’s locker from the time he or she arrives in the morning to the time he or she departs in the afternoon. If used at an inappropriate time or without permission, the devices will be confiscated, and students can expect that they will be taken from them for a number of days. The school cannot be responsible for the loss, damage, or theft or any of this equipment.

Fax & Telephone

Students may ask for permission to use the office telephone to make essential calls. The fax machine is for office use only and may not be used by students. Please do not send student homework to us via fax, as we will not accept it. Please help us work with students to decrease dependency on the cell phone and telephone.
If it is an emergency, Fran Clark, the Middle School administrative assistant, will take a message and do her best to deliver it to your child. The earlier in the day we receive your message, the more likely it is that it will be delivered. Messages should be received by 1:30 p.m.

**Fine & Performing Arts Rotations**

Sixth Grade students have a set rotation for Visual & Performing Arts classes, including drama, choir, technology and innovation, and visual art. Seventh and Eighth Graders submit a list of preferred choices for these classes. This combination of classes is designed to expose students to a wide variety of arts experiences before they have the option to become more specialized in high school.

**First Day of School**

All students should report to the Middle School on the first day. Each student is directed to his/her advisory. Significant orientation time is allotted during the first week of school to help students settle in to their classes. Advisors are available to answer questions and help each child get off to a great start.

**Get INvolved**

Get INvolved is the Parent Association volunteer sign-up event held in the Campus Center on the first day of school. Parents may volunteer for PA events online, but this event provides an opportunity to visit volunteer tables, to receive information, and ask Volunteer Committee Chairs questions about myriad Parent Association volunteer opportunities.

**Giant Relay Day**

Giant Relay Day is on a Friday, typically within two weeks of the end of school; please look at the master calendar to find the specific date. It is a school tradition that involves students, faculty, alumni, and parents. Everyone is welcome to attend. Eighth Graders volunteer on the morning of Giant Relay Day, assisting Lower School students with their Field Day activities. Sixth and Seventh graders go on an off-campus outing. In the
afternoon, the Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grade classes compete in a fun relay against each other. The school provides a barbeque lunch. The day culminates in the Giant Relay, which is a campus-wide competition among Senior, Faculty, Parent, and Alumni teams.

**Global Water Challenge**

Sixth Graders may participate in a Global Water Challenge through the MS science curriculum. The students compete in teams to solve a global water issue. The science teachers assist the students with forming teams and preparing for the competition. The competition is often on a Saturday, and the date varies from year to year. With this in mind, the Science Department tries to give parents advance notice of when this Saturday learning opportunity will be scheduled. Parents with expertise in this area may volunteer to judge the competition by contacting the science teachers.

**Grandparents Day**

The last school day before Winter Break is Grandparents Day. All grandparents are welcome to attend the scheduled events. There is a welcome presentation and performance in the morning, then grandparents may visit classes with their grandchildren, and there is a special lunch for all grandparents. There is a photographer on hand to take photos of children and their grandparents. This is a half day, and the school closes at 1:00 p.m. Parents generally do not attend the events.

**Halloween**

On the day that the MS celebrates Halloween, students are welcome to wear costumes that comply with the dress code for the day. Students are given specific expectations about what sorts of costumes are appropriate and which are not. In general, costumes must be non-threatening and modest. Play weapons are generally not allowed without specific permission from the principal.

**Holiday Parties**

The Middle School does not host holiday parties.
**Homecoming**

Homecoming is a fun September event for the CA community. There is a carnival for Lower School students in the morning, and there are many Upper School athletic events during the day. Middle School students usually have a Spirit Day on the Friday before Homecoming. The Parent Association will send out information about the specific events well in advance.

**Homework and School Project Guidelines**

Often parents ask how they ought to help their children with schoolwork. Figuring out the best way to help is not always easy, and there are some general principles the Middle School faculty has discussed that we feel are helpful for parents to know. Some analogies provide a good starting point. You would not step on the stage in the middle of a play or on the field in the middle of your child’s game to recite his/her lines or score the goal for him/her. The play and the game are performances: they are the opportunities for students to demonstrate the skills they have learned, and students both need and deserve the chance to show them off. The director and the coach need the opportunity to assess what the students have accomplished, and these performances provide that. Similarly, many of your child’s assignments, projects, essays, posters, etc., are performances. They are opportunities for your child to take the academic skills he or she has practiced and use them. Teachers assess student progress based on these performances. Homework is practice for these performances, and just as an athlete learns how to bat a ball by batting a ball (not by having a parent bat the ball), so a student learns how to solve equations or construct complex sentences by practicing him or herself.

Ironically, giving a student the answer when he or she has a question is probably the least effective way of providing help, because someone else has done the work. If a student wants to know how to take a penalty shot in soccer, and I kick the ball in the goal and tell the student how I did it, but don’t let him/her practice the shot, no one has learned. As you review the principles below, note that they are designed to help the student practice and master skills so that he or she can perform them later.
Do’s

• If your child is having some difficulty, have him/her verbally articulate the assignment. Have him/her read the directions or explain them to you and discuss the purpose with you.
• Have your child show you the guidelines or the rubric for each project, if provided.
• Listen to—do not read—what your child has written. Ask him/her to read it slowly, paying attention to the punctuation s/he has used.
• Encourage your child to show his/her draft to his/her teacher to review editing.
• Have your child show you the online sources s/he is using to do research. Monitor sources for appropriate age-level material.
• Allow teachers to assess your child’s work, not your work.
• If your child has a question, respond with questions designed to make your child think.
• Help your child manage his/her work time by helping him/her create a weekly schedule and setting work goals.
• Have plenty of supplies available (paper, pencils, etc.) for work and projects.
• Drop in while your child is working, and monitor work being done on computer frequently.
• Do review your child’s planner to talk about the week’s work.
• Do allow your child short breaks.
• Do let your child talk to a teacher if work could not get done or something unexpected led to an incomplete job.
• Do ask your child questions about reading s/he has done in English or social studies.
• Do encourage talk at home about the content of courses. There is a great deal of “meat” for good conversation.
• Encourage your child to talk with a teacher when your child has a question.
• Ask your child to write and rehearse his/her question with you prior to his/her taking it to the teacher the next day.
• Do quiz your child when s/he asks you to help in test or quiz preparation.
• Do use flashcards with your child for arithmetic facts, vocabulary, and foreign language study.
• Do provide help in math by setting up “parallel” problems. Use the examples or models from the book.
• Do allow major test and project dates to be posted in the kitchen where they can be checked frequently.
• Do let your child assume responsibility for his/her work.
• Do let your child make mistakes for which there are consequences. It is better now than later, as bad as it makes you feel.
• Do, after a child has made a mistake, debrief the causes and have him/her propose concrete solutions to help him/her to avoid future problems. Encourage his/her efforts to improve.
• Do encourage your child to do the most difficult work first.

Don’ts

• Do not hold a pen, pencil, crayon, or marker in your hand or touch a keyboard when you are helping a child with homework.
• Do not read what your child has written.
• Do not edit your child’s writing. Editing, adding to, deleting from a child’s work makes it impossible for the classroom teacher to know what your child has mastered.
• Do not simply answer questions your child may have, for s/he will become dependent on others to do his/her thinking for him/her.
• Do not cut, glue, draw or otherwise lift a finger to help with a project. Your only job is to provide reasonable supplies.
• Do not allow your child to play computer games or use the Internet without supervision.
• Do not allow your child to use online translators for foreign language homework.
• Do not allow breaks to become procrastination time.
  Do not solve the homework problems for your child.
  Do not bring in an assignment or project that is forgotten at home.
  Do not rescue your child when he or she makes a mistake.

• Do not let your child spend too much time on any one task; do not let him/her become “stuck.”
Homework Requests

If a student is absent for illness or an emergency, s/he should use the school website to get necessary assignments. Teachers understand that when a child is ill that getting better is the first priority. Teachers generally give students additional time to make up missing assignments caused by illness or emergency absence. Students who miss important assessments due to absence must make them up during weekly study hall.

Host Families

The Admission Office pairs current CA families who volunteer to serve as hosts with a new student and his/her family. Host families help welcome the new family to CA and serve as a resource throughout the year for the new family. The Admission Office provides guidelines.

How We Work Together

Listed below is a helpful, but by no means inclusive, list of the behaviors we expect of all students. For more information about student behavior and discipline please see the Student/Parent Handbook.

Do:

Accept responsibility for your decisions and actions.
Respect each other, the teachers and staff, and the building.
Respect the privacy and belongings of others.
Respect the feelings of others.
Support one another.
Exercise good manners at all times.
Be prompt to all classes and activities.
Exercise good sportsmanship.
Cooperate.
Act in ways that will be most helpful to those around you.
Be positive in your relations with all around you.
Act in ways that will not be harmful or hurtful to others.
Use language appropriate to this school setting.
Do your best to make the Middle School a better place.
We strive for fairness and encourage good judgment and respect for others. The standards mentioned above are essential to a healthy community, and we ask students to consider these standards carefully and adopt them. They are essential to the development of good character. Any student who does not measure up to the standards of the School or who acts in an inappropriate manner is subject to discipline as outlined in the Student/Parent Handbook.

**Leadership Opportunities in the Middle School**

MS students are offered a range of leadership opportunities in the Middle School. Opportunities include Leadership Team (applications are solicited in the spring of Seventh Grade) and Student Government (elected at the beginning of each academic year). Captains Council; founding and leading a student-sponsored club (Sixth, Seventh, Eighth Grades); CA Youth Philanthropy Board (applications solicited in the fall for Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades); and participation in the required service-learning units.

**Leadership Team**

In the spring of Seventh Grade year, students are invited to apply to become a member of the Eighth Grade Leadership Team. Eight to fourteen members are selected by faculty committee. Members of the team receive leadership training during regular meetings. The Team welcomes new students in August, participates in interpersonal problem-solving training for Sixth Graders and generally helps to set a tone of inclusivity and kindness in the division. Leadership Team members cannot also be on Student Council.

**Lockers**

Students are provided with lockers with attached locks, and care of lockers is each student’s responsibility. Students should not write on lockers or apply stickers that cannot easily be removed. Celebratory decoration on a locker (e.g., birthday) must be removed after one week. Lockers should be closed and locked at all times. **Lockers are of ample size and all belongings must be kept in them. No backpacks or clothes are allowed in or outside of classrooms, in the breakout areas, or in the lobby or hallways. Large**
items (e.g., cellos, oversized equipment bags) should be stored on the storage shelves in the main lobby or other designated areas. Students should organize their lockers so they can fit all their academic and athletic materials inside. Students are advised to take precautions with personal property and are discouraged from bringing valuables or large sums of money to school. Cameras and other electronics should be stored in LOCKED lockers.

Lockers are the property of CA. Students exercise control over their locker from other students, but not from the School and its officials. As a result, the Principal and his or her designees, as well as law enforcement officials, have the right to examine and search lockers to ensure School safety and the students’ welfare, including, without limitation, to determine if students are complying with School policies, harboring stolen property, weapons, or illegal or dangerous substances. Searches may also extend to the person, book bags, backpacks, purses, clothing, cell phones, iPods, etc. School and law enforcement officials have the right to examine any items found in the lockers and to seize any prohibited items or other items that jeopardize the safety of the students or the building or constitute health hazards. The School also reserves the right to conduct random searches of School lockers throughout the year.

**Locker Shelves** Many students put shelves into their lockers. Three-tiered shelves measuring 32”H x 11-1/4”D x 13”W fit in the MS lockers. The actual locker dimensions are 58”H x 13.25”D x 14.75”W.

**Lunch**

All Middle School students eat lunch during the normal scheduled time (12:15 p.m. to 12:55 p.m.) each day. While waiting to enter the lunch line and throughout lunch, students are expected to behave in an orderly and responsible way. When students are finished eating, they must bus their trays and clean their eating area. Ordering food from off-campus or bringing one’s own lunch is not allowed.
Middle School Parent Support Group with MS School Counselor

The MS Counselor offers a MS Parent Support Group once per trimester. Parents may choose to attend these meetings in order learn more and support one another in raising their teen. The groups are parent-driven, although the Counselor may also introduce topics, as she deems appropriate. For more comprehensive information about the MS Counseling Services, see “Counseling” in the Student/Parent Handbook.

Mustang Sports Club

Mustang Sports Club is an independent organization with its own board of directors, by-laws, budget, and staff that offers a variety of sporting opportunities. Because it is not part of CA, the rules for participation and team formation are determined by MSC and may not reflect the philosophy of CA’s athletic program. For more information, check the MSC website.

New Students and Families

Students and families new to CA or the Middle School are actively supported by CA in their transition through a variety of programs, including: host families, the New Parent Dinner, new student orientation day before school starts, and individual check-ins from the MS Counselor and advisor. New families are encouraged to reach out to schedule get-togethers with other MS students and their families. The advisor, counselor, and principal are all available to support each child.

No-Homework Nights and Vacations

There are several times each year when CA faculty members are asked to refrain from assigning homework or planning quizzes or tests. After a “no-homework day” designation, teachers may begin to assign work, but students will not have tests, quizzes, or major assignments due until the third day after the vacation.
No-Homework Vacations* for 2019-2020 are as follows:

- Thanksgiving
- Winter Break
- February Break
- Spring Break

*”No-Homework Vacation” means no homework to be given over the vacation, and no tests, quizzes, labs, or major assignments may be given until the third school day after the vacation.

Additional No-Homework Periods for 2019-2020 are as follows:

- The weekend beginning September 27 is a no-homework weekend. Additionally, Monday, September 30, and Tuesday, October 1 are no-homework evenings as well. On Monday, September 30, Tuesday, October 1, and Wednesday, October 2, no quiz, test, or major assignment should be given to students. Regular homework may be given on Wednesday, October 2, and tests/quizzes/major assignments resume on Thursday, October 3.
- October 8 & 9, 2019 are no-homework evenings; on Tuesday, October 9, Wednesday, October 10, and Thursday, October 11, no major assignments, tests, or quizzes should be given to students. Homework may be assigned on Thursday, October 10, and quizzes, tests, and major assignments resume on Friday, October 11.
- No homework should be given on the weekend of April 19, and Monday, April 22 is a no-test, -quiz, -lab, or -major assignment day. Homework may be assigned on Monday, April 22, and quizzes, tests, or major assignments resume on Tuesday, April 23.

Parents’ Role in the Middle School

During their years in Middle School, students are presented with intellectual and personal challenges that require increasing independence and responsibility. With this in mind, direct parent involvement in the classroom naturally shifts and decreases in the Middle School. That said, the MS tries to do a great job of keeping parents aware of events and activities at school. There are a number of ways that MS parents can
volunteer, support the school, and be an active part of the community. See the PA portal on the school website for more information. Parents are encouraged to keep apprised of MS and CA activities through frequent visits to the CA website, and by closely reading weekly electronic communications, and monthly electronic newsletters. The website provides up-to-date calendar information, upcoming events, and current happenings at school. For more specific expectations about parent behavior and support of the school’s program and policies, please see the Student/Parent Handbook Family Policies and Expectations section.

Potlucks

In the fall, MS Class Leads plan and host potluck dinners for each grade at a parent’s home. These potlucks provide an opportunity to get to know and catch up with fellow parents. Sometimes, these potlucks coincide with a MS social, providing an opportunity for parents to get together while students are socializing at the dance.

Principal Open-Door Sessions

Principal Bill Wolf-Tinsman holds regular Open-Door sessions, where parents are invited to stop in for a chat or to address any issues. In addition to these scheduled sessions, Mr. Wolf-Tinsman invites parents to contact him at any time (while encouraging parents to first address specific student-teacher matters directly with the student’s teacher or advisor).

Quiet Study and Reading

Times are allocated for students to study, to seek assistance from faculty, and to foster a love of independent reading.

Schedules

Every Middle School student has a unique schedule of classes. Sixth Grade students and students new to CA receive their schedules at the New Student Orientation held on the Monday before school begins. All other Middle School students receive their schedules on the first day of school.
School Parties and Spirit Days

The Middle School Council sponsors two parties or socials and three “Spirit Days” each year for Colorado Academy Middle School students.

Parties are usually held in the Campus Center and are chaperoned by Middle School faculty. An admission fee of approximately $5 is charged at the door to cover the costs of the disc jockey, refreshments, and other expenses. Dances run from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Parents should drop their children off no earlier than 6:50 p.m. (unless they are on a set-up committee) and pick them up at the door of the Campus Center promptly at 9:00 p.m. Students will not be allowed to leave the dance to “meet” their ride in the parking lot. All school rules and policies are in effect at dances. Students who wander away from the dance site without faculty permission or break school rules will be sent home as soon as their parents can be contacted and may receive additional consequences. The Middle School Dress Code Policy will be in effect. Students who have been absent from school on the day of the dance are not allowed to attend. No exceptions. We also ask that guests not be brought to a MS party, as it is intended to be an internal community builder.

The Athletic Department sponsors three Spirit Days, one each trimester. On a Spirit Day, students wear CA colors and team jerseys to school. A variety of athletic games occur on campus after school, and students and parents are encouraged to attend. Free pizza and lemonade are available at the games.

Snacks, Food, and Beverages
Students should bring their own snacks from the list below. The snacks should be left in the Advisor’s room. Parents should not bring a snack if their child forgets. This is an important aspect of teaching your child responsibility. Only items on the list below are allowed. (Note: because of allergy concerns, any snack brought to school should not contain nuts of any sort. If your son/daughter has a dietary restriction, please be in touch with the advisor to discuss appropriate snacks.) Some advisories create a “snack rotation.” In this case, a student will bring snack for the advisory periodically during the school year. Students may not keep any food or
beverages in their lockers. If these items are found, they will be confiscated immediately and an infraction will be given.

**Snack List**

Granola bars (no nuts), yogurt, string cheese, fruit and veggie chips, Goldfish, fruit leathers & other dried fruit, carrots/celery or other vegetables, pretzels, small bagels w/cream cheese (no nuts), fruit (tangerines, oranges, apples, etc.) jerky, protein bars, pre-sliced cheese or meat, whole wheat crackers.

- Items not on the above list are not allowed in school.
- Items like cheese, Gogurts, etc., do not need refrigeration, since the items are consumed early enough in the day that they will keep.
- All items need to be portable, since they are consumed in advisor rooms.
- **No drinks are ever to be brought in with snack;** students are encouraged to bring water to school. Only water is allowed in the building. No pop, juice drinks, sports drinks, etc. are allowed.
- Students may bring in baked goods (e.g., cupcakes, donuts, etc.) only for a birthday treat, and the item must not require refrigeration. No exceptions.

**Social & Party Guidelines for Middle Schoolers**

Here are a few general things to consider:

- Anything that could compromise the safety or wellbeing of a child should not be allowed.
- More structured activities for this age are better than less structured ones.
- Please be as inclusive as possible. This is particularly important if you are inviting more than a few people.
- Carefully monitor all activities.
- Always be in touch with the parents hosting an event, as this helps to ensure safety and clear communication between all parties involved.
- It is often wise to have conversations with your child about ground rules and expectations before any gathering.
• Please be aware of both the intentional and unintentional messages that are sent when hosting a party. Having a coed party in a dark basement with suggestive dance music may send implicit messages about dating behavior during Middle School. By contrast, having a single-sex get-together structured around inclusive games and activities sends a very different one.

Socializing Among Parents

Community-building is encouraged and valued at CA and in the Middle School. Grade-level potlucks, Spirit Days, MS coffees, the spring Taste of CA: A Celebration of Cultures, and impromptu invites from other families for outings/gatherings after sports events are great ways to connect with the CA community.

SPEAK Lectures

Each year, CA organizes a series of presentations on a wide variety of topics, which may be of interest to parents. Some of these opportunities coincide with scheduled Parent Association meetings. Sometimes they are stand-alone events. We have intentionally targeted a wide variety of topics, hoping that most parents will find one or two relevant and valuable. That said, we truly do not want parents to feel that attendance is mandatory at any of these offerings. Our hope is to provide parents with the tools and knowledge needed to help their child grow in healthy and productive ways. Information about this year’s series can be found on the CA website.

Standardized Testing

The school administers a math, writing, and critical thinking assessment each year to students. The testing occurs at various times during the year and is used to track the effectiveness of our curriculum for developing math, writing, and problem solving skills.
Storage for Sports and Music Equipment

MS students may store sports equipment in their gym lockers, or for some sports, in the MS building, during the school day. Each grade level has a specific location to store its equipment. Eighth Grade students may store sports equipment on shelves in the MS hallway. Seventh Graders may store equipment in the MS closet across from the MS office. Sixth Grade students may store equipment in the closet across from room 131.

Student Government

The purpose of the Council is to provide leadership in the Middle School and to encourage student involvement in maintaining and improving the school climate, supporting students’ endeavors in academics, the arts, and athletics, and sponsoring social events and community services. (Note: Eighth Grade students who are on the Leadership Team may not also run for Student Council, as there are numerous time conflicts. This division of responsibility also allows more Eighth Grade students an opportunity to develop leadership skills.)

The Council is comprised of fifteen members, three from each grade level, who are elected by the students in that grade level. Candidacy includes submitting a written statement in response to a question or topic posed by the faculty advisors. Candidates deliver a speech to students at a grade-level assembly, followed by secret ballot election. The advisors of that grade and the Council faculty advisors supervise elections. Students present their speech to their advisor in advance of presenting to students.

The three candidates in each grade who receive the most votes will serve as Council members for the school year.

A Council member is expected to:

- Attend every meeting and be an active participant, contributing his/her own views and representing those of classmates.
- Follow the procedures of the Council and support peers.
- Participate in the actions taken by the Council, which includes setting up, attending, and taking a leadership role in each activity.
• Inform the student body of Council actions (go to advisories and publish minutes of committee meetings).
• Serve on any two committees as determined by the Council.

After the student body elects the Council members, they elect a Council Coordinator and a Council Secretary. The Council takes nominations and seconds from the floor, and then a secret ballot election determines the officers.

If any Council member is unable or unwilling to perform his/her duties as described in the Council Constitution, or if faculty or Council members have concerns about a member’s participation, the faculty advisors and principal will determine a course of action that may lead to the removal or replacement of a member.

**Study Habits Recommended for Middle School Students**

Effective study habits are essential for success in Middle School. Here are some suggestions.

1. Make a schedule that gives you time for study and relaxation; stick to it.
2. Organize your study area. It should be comfortable and quiet, and it should be equipped with the supplies you need, including a dictionary. Do not study on your bed; this is never conducive to focused attention.
3. Try to sit and concentrate for at least 20-30 minutes at a stretch; then take a break.
4. Keep a plan book (on paper or electronically) in which you list daily assignments. Keep weekly assignment sheets with each subject notebook so that specific details and instructions are readily available.
5. When you are studying:
   • Decide what you have to accomplish.
   • Do the hardest/most important work first.
   • Determine what you need to know.
   • Test yourself to see what you understand.
• Explain out loud what you have studied.
• Proofread what you have written.
• Evaluate your use of your time.
• Make a note to get help on anything with which you still have trouble.

Teacher Gifts

There are generally no formal or informal group gifts from students/families for teachers at the winter holiday break or at the end of the school year. Students and families are welcome to express their appreciation to teachers in their own way, but there is no expectation or requirement to do so.

Colorado Academy Employees are prohibited from accepting, from students or parents, personal gifts, favors, services, or tickets valued at more than $100. This policy is established to avoid the implied or actual influence upon an employee’s impartial judgment towards students and their parents. Group gifts from more than one family are discouraged. Group gifts make it more difficult to adhere to these spending limits, and they place parents in the difficult position of collecting money from other parents. While families greatly appreciate what employees do for their children, your adherence to this policy is very important to the equity and integrity of the school community. Please remember that your actions expressing gratitude toward others provide an opportunity to model behavior for your children. A hand-written note of genuine expression is always greatly appreciated.