

## New Middle School Parent FAQs

### **Q: How do I become involved in the Northwest School Community?**

**A:** Join the Parent Association! The goals of the Parent Association are:

- To promote a sense of community and encourage open communication between families and The Northwest School - including facilitation of family feedback through the **Parent Rep Process**.
- To provide educational opportunities for parents and guardians through Parent Association Forums
- To support the Northwest School's mission and philosophy by recruiting volunteers to help with school events, programs and activities

Also, read the *E-news* that will be sent through email to families every week. The newsletter includes events and important happenings for the upcoming 2 weeks and is an important way to stay informed, connected, and involved.

### **Q: What can my child do after school?**

**A:** Middle School students may remain at the school until 4 p.m. daily. **At 4 p.m., students either need to be heading home or be in the after-school program.** The **After School Program** is a supervised setting for Middle School students who need to be at school until 6:00 p.m. each or on a particular school day. This program is not available to non-NWS students. This is a drop-in program so there is no need to register. The program is held in the school library, starting daily at 3:30, and provides a quiet space to work on homework and get some organizational assistance.

Upper School students may remain at school until 4:30 p.m., staying later only if involved in a supervised school activity.

If you are a family on financial aid, please refer to the *Northwest Experience Fund* information in regards to how fees for the after school program are covered.

### **Q: Who do I go to if I have questions?**

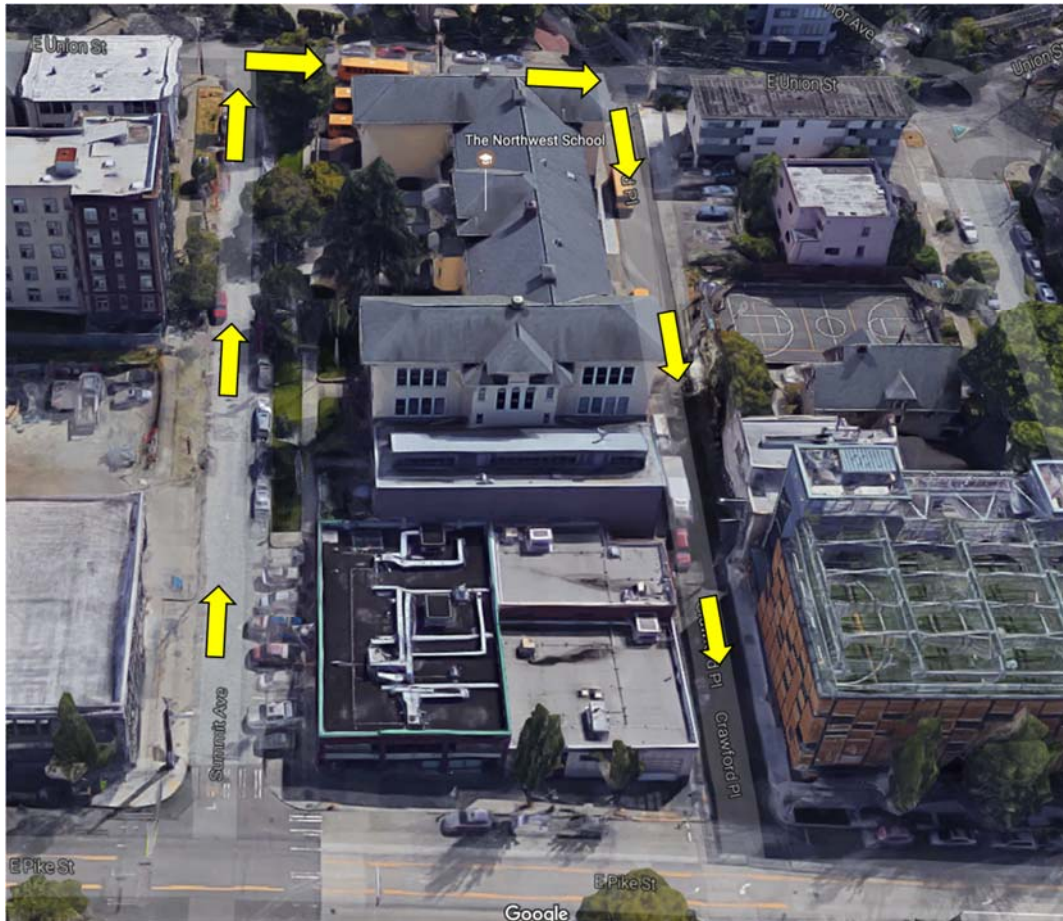
**A:** If you have a question about a particular class, please reach out to the teacher of that class. Teachers want to answer your questions, and they want to help problem solve if your child is having problems in a particular class. If you have a question about multiple classes, please contact your child's advisor. If the question relates to the grade level, such as grade level trips, please reach out to the Grade Level Coordinator. Maria Mazcorro, Receptionist, is also a wealth of information and able to help direct you if you are unsure of who best to contact.

### **Q: Where do I drop off/pick up my child?**

**A:** Pick-up, especially in the first few weeks of school, can get crowded and feel challenging. We encourage parents to exercise courtesy, common sense, and *patience* when picking up or dropping off students.

We encourage parents and guardians to drop off and pick up 6th graders in front of the school on Summit. We request parents and guardians to always approach Summit from Pike street so that traffic is

going 1 way, southbound, up the hill. Likewise, we encourage parents to enter Crawford (the street between our main building and our gym/lunchroom building which we refer to as 401) from Union, proceeding northbound, or down the hill towards Pike. When entering Summit for drop off or pick up, proceed as far up the street as possible before pulling into our loading zone. This helps avoid a back-up. Please see the diagram below:



When students get older and more comfortable with the neighborhood, we encourage families to designate other places, perhaps a block or 2 away from the school, to meet for pick-up. **Please note, though, that when there is a late middle school game or an evening middle school event, coaches and chaperones insist on seeing kids connect with their parents or guardians.**

**Keep the line on Summit moving:** if your student isn't ready, please circle around the block. After driving southbound, up the hill from Pike on Summit, turn right on Union, and then right on Crawford if you need to circle the main school building.

**Q: Where do I find information about upcoming events?**

**A:** Our All School Calendar – found online here: <http://www.northwestschool.org/daily-life/calendar> - includes the events happening at school and in our school community, including athletics practices and games. We try to keep this calendar as up to date as possible. We also offer a “Calendar Highlights”

which lists days off, breaks, and other important events. These highlights can be found here: <http://northwestschool.org/ui/img/public-documents/17-18-Calendar-Highlights-Final.pdf>

**Q: What trips will my student be participating in during the school year?**

**A:** Middle Schoolers will be taking two grade level trips this year, one in the fall and one in the spring. This fall, the 6<sup>th</sup> grade will be visiting Camp Huston, in Gold Bar, WA, from Wednesday, September 14<sup>th</sup> through Friday, September 16<sup>th</sup>. The 7<sup>th</sup> grade will have a stay-in-Seattle experience during September 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> designed to meet the same overall goals as the trips: community building, engaging student themes of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade year, and exploring parts of our curriculum by exploring our city. This event will include an overnight. Finally, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade will be visiting Camp Burton on Vashon Island, from Wednesday, September 14<sup>th</sup> to Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup>, where our Upper School Peer Mentors will join them for part of the programming.

The 7<sup>th</sup> grade spring trip will be from Wednesday, May 23<sup>rd</sup> to Friday, May 25<sup>th</sup>. 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders will each have a one-day field trip on Friday, May 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Q: Should I get my student a smartphone?**

**A:** Some incoming middle school families have already made decisions in regards to phones and some are facing this question. If you are asking this question and would like to wait before your middle schooler has immediate access to the internet, social media, and other apps, know that it only takes one other parent to delay giving their child a smart phone for it to be okay for your child. Pay attention to who your child is and their ability to demonstrate self-control and their sensitivity to social interactions to help gauge their readiness for a smart phone. You can text and keep track of your kids with a “dumb” phone.

Regardless of your family decision, we recommend being in regular conversation with your student about their relationship with technology. Northwest has set some limits in regards to time and spaces for students to be device free, but does allow students to use their devices during their free time. For middle schoolers, this is when they have finished their lunch and left the lunch room. We are also in regular conversation in class and through advisory about digital citizenship in addition to digital literacy.

**Q: What does the Middle School do to help students get organized and learn study skills?**

**A:** The skills of organization, time management, test preparation, and so on lie at the heart of learning in Middle School. Students learn and practice these skills in the context of their academic classes, using the assignments that are part of the regular curriculum. Teachers focus on these skills as they relate to the actual work students are doing; usually, the development of skills is the more critical piece of a lesson than the acquisition of knowledge. All students receive a homework planner at the beginning of the year, and teachers often incorporate these planners into the process of giving homework. Advisors also meet periodically with students to review their progress, and in this context students often receive help specifically in the area of organization and time management.

**Q: What social events does the school provide for Middle School students?**

**A:** Several times during the year, various organizations within the school (e.g., interested Middle School students) will organize some social activities such as a movie night, International Night Market, game

night, or sometimes a dance. You are welcome to come in when you drop your child off for our social activities and get a sense of the atmosphere. Two or three times during the year, the Middle School will take time from our regular schedule of classes to do something fun and social, such as roller-skating or bowling. Social events are announced in Morning Meeting, at Community Meetings each Wednesday, and are included in *E-news* and the on-line calendar.

**Q: When will I hear how my child is doing in school?**

**A:** Evaluations that include narratives from the teachers are sent to parents the week after each trimester. In December, students and parents will meet with your child’s advisor for a student-led conference. Advisors help prepare their advisees to lead these conferences by guiding students to reflect about progress, success, and challenges. Students take action on this reflection by goal-setting and all of this is shared and discussed at the conference. More information about how parents can support this process will be sent towards the end of trimester 1.

Advisors will reach out to parents to introduce themselves during the first 2 weeks of school. 6<sup>th</sup> grade advisors will touch base again in the middle of trimester 1 to share feedback from your child’s teachers. After that, advisors will communicate on an as-needed basis, but are available if you have questions, concerns, or would like to check-in. Teachers, also, will reach out if needed and are available to answer your questions, address concerns, or help problem solve.

**Q: What happens during Advisory?**

**A:** Advisory is a 30 minute period, four times a week, where advisees meet with their advisors for structured programming. Below is the schedule for Flex this school year:

	Week 1				Week 2			
	Monday	Tuesday	Thursday	Friday	Monday	Tuesday	Thursday	Friday
6th	Advisory	PE	Study Hall	Interest Groups	Advisory	Grade Level Meeting	Study Hall	Interest Groups
7th	Advisory	Grade Level Meeting	Study Hall	Interest Groups	Advisory	PE	Study Hall	Interest Groups
8th	Advisory	Grade Level Meeting	Study Hall	Interest Groups	Advisory	PE	Study Hall	Interest Groups

The topics touched on during advisory this past school year included various orienting activities at the beginning the year, digital literacy and citizenship, individual and group identity, academic reflection and goal setting, organization, and a longer unit on gratitude.

For more information on the Advisory Program, please see the attached hand-out (on blue paper).