

Guidance Newsletter

Stissing Mountain Middle School

February 11, 2010

Study Skills

As students move through the middle school years they will find that with good study habits and techniques their grades will soar. Most students usually do well in elementary schools, listening and completing assignments with ease. Things sometimes change when they enter sixth grade.

Students in the middle school years are expected to be able to work and study independently. This sometimes comes as a shock to sixth grade students and their parents, but be prepared, because expectations continue to grow as students move through the middle school and into high school.

As many students are not accustomed to studying, here are some tips that will help in the coming years.

The first and possibly most important tip is to **attend class**. Absences should be limited to absolutely necessary days. Although work can be sent home to be completed, a student who is absent is not benefiting from teacher instruction.

In class students should **take notes**. Luckily, in

most classes, all of the notes are written on the board. Students should also **ask questions** in class to help with understanding topics.

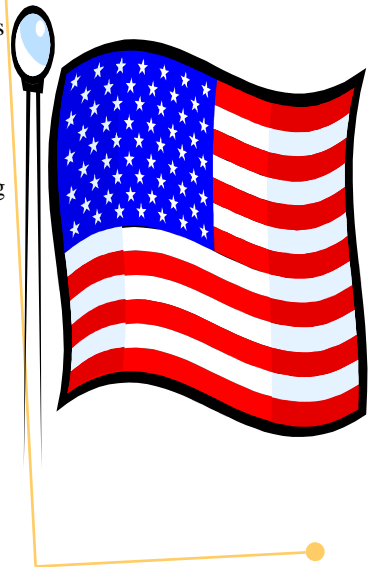
At home students should make sure to **complete assignments**. If there are no specific assignments for a class, **each day's topic should be reviewed** that night. There is no such thing as having no homework anymore, students need to study and review daily.

Studying should be more than simply sitting and reading the same things over and over. Students do better when information is presented to them in a variety of ways. This is why teachers review lessons orally, write notes on the blackboard and assign reading or homework. Students all learn differently and the more ways that information is presented to them the more likely they are to retain what they are studying. Students can make flash cards and be tested with them. They can read out loud or be read to in order to help with comprehension. Students can also summarize what they have learned verbally and in their own words, also helping with comprehension.

Parents and students should come up with a weekly schedule for studying. Teachers notify students about tests ahead of time in order to give them a chance to spread out their studying. Students should not be cramming, only studying on the night before a test. Studying should be spread out over the week.

The area in which students study should be the same place each time. Have your child designate a place to study and be consistent. Remove things that will distract from the ability to study. This should be a quiet, well lit area **without a television**. Other distractions, such as phone conversations, radios and other disruptions should also be eliminated.

Lastly, in order to learn and understand the maximum amount of information, students need to be **responsible for their own learning**. Topics grow more and more difficult and students need to be invested in their education. It is now the student's responsibility to complete assignments, study and take an interest in the material being taught.



Contact Information

The Middle School
Guidance Counselor,
Tim Mahon, can be
reached at
398-7181
Extension 330

Peer Pressure

Peer pressure is one thing that all middle school students have in common. It is the perceived pressure that people exert on each other in order to change their attitude, behavior and/or morals in order to conform to the habits of a larger group. Of course there can be positive types of peer pressure, such as encouragement to do well in school, on a sports team or involvement in a club or activity. The more talked about peer pressure, though, is negative.

Students who have a low self-esteem or a lack of confidence are more likely to find themselves pressured by their

peers. Also students who are feeling isolated or lonely or do not have strong ties to family or a peer group will be at higher risk of being trapped by peer pressure.

At school our faculty and staff reinforce decision making skills that can help students avoid situations where their values will be compromised. But the best place for students to learn to not respond to negative peer pressure is at home. Children whose parents speak to them regularly about decision making and peer influences are at less risk of making bad choices or experimenting with cigarettes, drinking and drugs.

This communication is vital. Open and honest communication between parents and their children helps reduce the chances that a child will be influenced negatively by a peer.

Also getting to know your child's friends, as well as their parents, and being familiar with your child's activities will help put your mind at ease.

State Testing

The New York State Education Department has modified its schedule for Elementary and Intermediate level testing for the 2009-2010 school year. In previous years the English Language Assessment was taken by our students in January and the Math Assessment was taken in March. This year the English Language Arts Assessment (ELA) will be taken by students in grades 3-8 during the week of April 26th. The Math Assessment for the same grade levels, will be taken during the week of May 5th.

Grade 8 Science Performance Testing will take place between May 24th and June 3rd. The Grade 8 Science Written segment of the test will take place on June 7th. The grade 8 Social Studies Assessment will be given Monday/Tuesday June 14th-15th.

Also, the Second Language Proficiency exam is scheduled for June 21st. 8th graders who are currently taking Spanish or French will be taking this exam for high school credit.



Early Dismissal Reminder

Middle School students will be dismissed at 12:00 on Friday, March 12th, and Friday, May 14th. Faculty and staff will be involved in professional development

Thursday, February 25th and Friday, April 23rd are schedule for Superintendent's Conferences. There is no school for students those days.

On Friday, March 26th, the day before spring break students will be released at 10:30 AM.



Homework Hotline

Don't forget, you can check your child's assignments **every day** on the Homework Hotline. Just call the Middle School at 398-7181

For 6th grade dial extension 370

For 7th grade dial extension 371

For 8th grade dial extension 372

Also, ask your child to see their planner. They should have written their assignments down during the day.

Or log on to the internet at www.ppcsd.org, click on schools, select Middle School, then look on the left hand side for each grade level's homework.