WELCOME TO THE MIDDLE SCHOOL!

This handbook was prepared to give students information that will help them in middle school. Please read it carefully so that you will know what we expect of you and also what you can expect of us.

If there are any items that you do not understand or want to clarify further, discuss them with your teachers, your school counselors, or any member of the administrative staff. We ask also that you share this handbook with your parents/guardians and that you keep it in your notebook or in some other convenient place where you can refer to it.

Remember, if you do not know the rules, your rights, and your responsibilities, you will not get as much from your school experience as you desire or deserve. Get to know the teachers, the counselors, and the administrators. They are interested in your well being and will help you in every way possible.

With the cooperation of all students, we can look forward to a successful and happy year.
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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MIDDLE SCHOOL
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The middle schools in the Pennsbury School District are divided into three grades; sixth, seventh, and eighth. The students on each grade level are divided equally among the staff. Accordingly, the staff is organized into interdisciplinary teams. On each grade level the same interdisciplinary team teaches the same group of students. Working as a group, the teachers from each team get to know their students on a more personal level.

Special area teachers in family & consumer science, applied engineering and technology, music, art, health and physical education are involved with the teams. Team planning tends to personalize the educational program and make it more effective.

To provide opportunities for all children:

1. To develop and apply thinking skills that reflect their best intellectual potential;
2. To develop and demonstrate the skills of communication representative of positive individual and social behavior;
3. To recognize and understand cultural differences among peoples of the world and their contributions to American life;
4. To develop creative skills and appreciate the achievements of others;
5. To develop and maintain habits and attitudes that contribute toward physical and mental health;
6. To gain the knowledge of and develop the practical skills appropriate to career and vocational goals;
7. To develop the talents, skills, and attitudes necessary for satisfying lifetime recreational activities; and
8. To use the knowledge and skills of the educational program for personal achievement and responsible citizenship.
ACTIVITIES

Both during and after school, students have the opportunity to participate in many special activities throughout the year. These include band, orchestra, chorus, drama, classroom extensions, dances, fun nights, student council, and concerts. Additional activities may be offered by teachers during the year, as well. **It should be noted that no student is to remain for an after-school activity unless supervised by a member of the professional staff.**

ASSEMBLIES

Each middle school will have educational and entertaining assemblies throughout the school year. Both school talent and professional programs will be utilized. We insist upon a high standard of behavior at assemblies as well as elsewhere. You are expected to use good manners, be courteous, and show appropriate appreciation to those presenting the assembly.

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance and promptness to class are expected of all students.

Absences resulting from personal illness or emergencies at home are excused. Upon returning to school after an absence, the student must ask the homeroom teacher for an excuse card. The card should be completed and signed by the parent or guardian and returned to the teacher within three school days.

Students who arrive at school following homeroom are to report to the main office for a class admission slip.

Students who have to leave school during the day **must obtain permission from the school office at the beginning of the school day.** This permission will be granted for serious or urgent matters and will require a letter from a parent or guardian. The parent or guardian must come to the office to meet the student and will be required to sign out the student.

Perfect attendance constitutes attendance at school every school day, for the entire school day. Excused, planned absences, absences due to illness, absences due to religious observations and family vacations will count against perfect attendance. Lateness to school for any reason, as well as any time missed during the school day, will also affect perfect attendance status.

Students who are moving from the district or leaving the middle school for other reasons must report to the guidance office with their parents/guardians for a withdrawal form on the morning of their last day. A transfer card will be issued to the departing student.

AWARDS

Outstanding scholastic achievement is recognized by having students’ names placed on a school Honor Roll. Straight A grades, Most Improved Student, Student of the Month, Perfect Attendance, and the American Legion Award are other means of student recognition. Some of these awards are presented at school assemblies.
BICYCLES, SKATEBOARDS, SCOOTERS

For students who elect to ride bicycles to school, racks have been provided. Bicycles must have wheel or sprocket locks. The school is not responsible for stolen or damaged bicycles, but will cooperate with students, parents/guardians, and police in solving problems. **Skateboards, roller skates/blades, or scooters are not permitted on school property.**

BUS PROCEDURES AND POLICIES

Students should know their bus schedules and should ride only on buses assigned to them. Students must have prior administrative approval to ride a bus other than their own. Approvals are only made for students who need to ride home with another student for school related reasons (homework/projects). All requests must be made in writing by the parents or guardians of both parties. All buses arrive and depart from the bus dock. At the close of the school day, buses will leave promptly. Students who are walkers are not to board a bus. Late buses will be available to students who have arranged for after-school help, activities, sports, and detention. Check late bus schedules in the office or with your teacher.

BUSES WILL LEAVE FROM THE BUS DOCK. TO BE SURE OF A RIDE, GET THERE AT LEAST FIVE MINUTES AHEAD OF TIME.

BUS RULES

Students are required to follow these rules in order to maintain a safe, pleasant atmosphere on all buses.

1. Be courteous and respect the rights of others; use appropriate language at all times.
2. Do not eat or drink on the bus; keep the bus clean.
3. Obey the driver promptly. The driver has full responsibility for the bus and passengers; the driver is authorized to assign seats.
4. Stay seated.
5. Keep head, hands, and feet inside the bus. Never throw anything out of the window.
6. In the event of an emergency, remain seated until directed to do otherwise by the bus driver.
7. If a student chooses not to follow these rules, disciplinary action will be taken which may result in the student not being permitted to ride the bus.
**DRESS CODE**

Clothing that disrupts or inhibits education or endangers the safety of the individual or the safety of others is not permitted to be worn in school. The types of clothing listed below are considered not proper for school and not permitted to be worn in school:

1. Outdoor clothing (hats, coats, heavy jackets, etc.) unless climatic conditions warrant exceptions.
2. Clothing that is designed especially for highly physical or out-of-school activities (tank tops, leotards, swimwear, yoga pants, et cetera).
3. See-through clothing without undergarments or clothing that obviously displays undergarments.
4. Clothing that exposes any part of the midriff (belly shirts, shrinks, halters, bra tops, etc.).
5. Jeans that drag on the floor, are slit, tattered, or in a state of disrepair.
6. Clothing or patches on clothing which can be interpreted as obscene by message or placement.
7. Shower thongs or flip-flops (shoes or other appropriate footwear must be worn at all times). All sandals must have a strap at the back for safety reasons.
8. Shorts should be mid-thigh length. No cutoffs. **Pants and shorts are to be worn and belted appropriately at the waist.**
9. Clothing that is revealing or excessively tight (leggings, jeggings, low cut attire, sleeveless attire).
10. Leggings may be worn only if the shirt, top, dress or skirt with it completely covers the buttocks.

If there is a question regarding appropriateness of dress, the principal will be the final judge.

**DETENTIONS**

If a student is required to remain after school for disciplinary reasons, there are two kinds of detention:

1. **Classroom Teacher’s Detention** - When a teacher assigns an afternoon detention, the student reports to the assigning teacher’s room.
2. **Administrative After-School Detention** - Students may be assigned to the school administrative detention for reasons that are described in the Student Conduct Policy.
3. **Saturday Detention** - Saturday detentions are held every other week for students whose behavior or actions warrant a disciplinary action greater than detention but that do not meet the criteria for suspension. They are held at one school and include students from all three middle schools.

**EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM**

The Pennsbury School District utilizes an automated telephone messaging service that enables District administrators to contact parents/guardians at multiple numbers and an optional email address when there is an emergency situation or urgent message. In addition, school building administrators may initiate an informational, community outreach phone call or e-mail that contacts one number per household.

Parents/guardians are asked to keep this information as updated as possible, keeping in mind that only the primary number is used for non-urgent messages. All of this information is maintained in the strictest of confidence and the School District’s main number, 215-428-4100, will appear on the recipient’s caller I.D.
EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING

Official notification of Pennsbury school closings, delays and early dismissals is provided by the following sources:

- www.pennsburysd.org
- Automated calling system
- Hotline: 215-428-4100 - option 8
- Verizon Cable Channel 42
- Comcast Cable Channel 28

Please refer to the Emergency School Closing link on the District homepage for secondary notification sources.

FIRE DRILLS

The safety and welfare of all students are of prime concern to us. Therefore, it is of the greatest importance that frequent drills be practiced. Fire drills are practiced regularly. They may take place without advance warning. In case of a fire drill, please follow closely the fire emergency plans that are posted in each classroom.

Teachers will discuss fire precaution and fire drill procedures with students and instruct them where to assemble during a drill.

Anyone causing a false alarm will be suspended from school, reported to the Fire Marshall, and prosecuted in court for endangering the lives of others and interrupting the education of fellow students.

GENERAL SCHOOL REGULATIONS

Since a school is only as good as the people in it, the thoughtfulness and consideration we show each other affects all of us. The general purposes of discipline regulations are to aid in establishing a school atmosphere in which an individual has the opportunity for maximum learning and to aid in providing a school climate where each individual’s rights and property are respected and protected. In an effort to provide some guidelines, the following regulations have been established:

1. Behave yourself at all times. Treat others the way you want to be treated.
2. The use or possession of tobacco is prohibited in school or on school property. Use or possession of tobacco in any form will result in a citation being issued and a fine assessed.
3. You may remain after school only by permission of the staff and under teacher supervision. Permission will be granted for the following reasons: academic makeup work, school activities, and library use.
4. Keep your lockers clean and neat. Lockers are provided as a convenience for the safekeeping of personal belongings. Don’t tamper with the personal belongings, locks or lockers of other students.
5. Disruptive behavior, fighting, insubordination, disrespect, extortion, truancy, vandalism, or any like behaviors are not acceptable at the middle school. Appropriate action for individuals involved will be taken when such behaviors occur.
6. You must have a pass if you are in the hall while classes are in session.
7. Do not run or push. Running and pushing are dangerous to others as well as yourself. WALK!
8. No gum chewing.
9. Assume and share the responsibility for the appearance of the areas which you use during the school day, such as: cafeteria, classrooms, halls, lavatories and school grounds. Place litter in the containers provided.
10. Be on time for all classes and other school functions.
11. Avoid indecent and obscene language.
12. Students must refrain from any type of public display of affection, including, but not limited to, holding hands, hugging, and kissing.
13. Walk on the right side of the hallways when changing classes.
14. Students who report to the main office are expected to inform the secretary of why they are there. Courtesy and patience are necessary since this area is usually very busy.

SCHOOL COUNSELING SERVICES

The school counseling offices in the middle schools are located adjacent to the main office.

The counselors are your advisors who will help you adjust to school and will answer your questions. They will help you to solve your problems, large and small, educational or social. They want to help you reach your full potential.

Your counselor will meet and talk with you during the school year. If you want to see your counselor, stop in the guidance office and sign up for an appointment. You will receive an appointment slip to get out of class, but permission must be obtained from your teacher prior to leaving the class to go to the guidance office.

Remember, you are experiencing many changes at this time in your life and your counselors are available to help you cope with these changes. Your counselor will answer questions about courses, career thoughts, personal needs, and difficulties with friends or fellow students. In addition, your counselor will keep your school records on file and will communicate between your home and the school whenever necessary. Conferences between teachers and parents/guardians are arranged in the guidance office.

HOMEROOM

At the sound of the homeroom bell, all students should be in their seats ready for opening exercises. Listen quietly and attentively to the daily announcements.

HOMEWORK

Every student will have homework. The amount will vary from grade to grade. If no written work is assigned, you are expected to review your notes or the lessons of the day. If you want to succeed academically, you should do every one of your assignments without fail and never leave long-term assignments until the last minute.

If you are absent from school, call a reliable friend that night for your assignments. If you are going to be absent for three or more days, have your parent/guardian call the guidance secretary. The guidance secretary will initiate the procedure for gathering your homework assignments. The assignments may be picked up at 3:00 p.m. the next day. By following this procedure, we avoid interrupting classroom instruction on the day of the call.

HOMEWORK ACCESS

Charles Boehm ................. www.pennsburysd.org > Schools > Charles Boehm > Homework
Pennwood .......................... www.pennsburysd.org > Schools > Pennwood > Homework
William Penn ....................... www.pennsburysd.org > Schools > William Penn > Homework

Type the Pennsbury website (www.pennsburysd.org), click on Schools, click on desired school, click on homework.
**HONOR ROLL**

An academic honor roll of students in Grades 6-8 is issued after the close of each marking period. To be eligible, a student must demonstrate A or B performance in all subjects and pass Health and Physical Education.

**LIBRARY**

The school library is open before and after school. Students may access their accounts by student I.D. number.

**LOCKERS**

Students will be assigned a locker by homeroom teachers on the first day of school. Some lockers come equipped with combination locks. Some lockers require use of a padlock. No additional locks will be permitted. Locks can be purchased on the first day of school. You should not give your locker combination to anyone. Only school locks purchased in school may be used.

Money, watches and jewelry are not to be left in lockers. The school is not responsible for stolen items.

School lockers are school property and are given to students on loan for the school year. The school authorities reserve the right to inspect the lockers at their discretion.

**LOST AND FOUND**

Lost items are placed in the office. If an item is lost, check all of the rooms where the article may have been left; then check the office. The school cannot be responsible for lost items.

**LUNCH TIME**

The lunch period is intended to be a period of quiet and friendly relaxation. Good manners are expected of everyone.

Cafeteria personnel will provide a nutritional lunch in pleasant surroundings. Parents/guardians may maintain a lunch account through the cafeteria manager or students may pay cash for food purchases.

A full lunch may be purchased, but students may, of course, bring their own lunches from home. Snacks, milk, cookies, and ice cream are also sold in the cafeteria. A student may buy only one dessert item and only if he/she purchases a full lunch or brings a lunch from home.

The maintenance of an attractive and clean cafeteria depends on each student accepting individual responsibilities and observing the following procedures:

- During the assigned lunch period, students are not to go to their lockers or to other areas of the building. While at lunch, they are to use only the lavatories located in the cafeteria area.
- All food must be eaten at the tables in the cafeteria. No food or drink is to be carried out of the cafeteria unless directed by a staff member.
- Tables and chairs are to be left in a clean, neat condition ready to be used by the next lunch shift. Chairs are to be placed against the tables. Students will be responsible for these tasks.
- All trash is to be deposited in the receptacles provided.
MEDICAL INFORMATION

If you are medically excused from physical education at any time during the school year, you need to bring a note from your doctor explaining the illness/injury and the length of time to be excused to the school counseling office.

If you become ill or injured during the school day, be excused by your teacher to report to the school nurse in the health suite.

If you are taking medication prescribed by your doctor, bring a note from your parent/guardian giving the nurse permission to give you your own medicine in the nurse’s office, under her supervision. The medicine must be in the bottle or dispenser issued by the pharmacy.

The school nurse will schedule, supervise, or assist in the various physical tests and examinations. Hearing, vision, and dental examinations are required by law. Student physicals are given in grade six and dental examinations in grade seven.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the presentation of another writer’s ideas or works as if they were one’s own. Plagiarism involves giving the impression that a person has thought, written or produced something that has, in fact, been borrowed from another.

Middle school students are not permitted to plagiarize their work. Penalties, up to and including an F on the assignment (with no makeup), shall be imposed, according to the severity and number of infringements.

REPORT CARDS

In the middle school, pupil progress will be reported four times yearly for all grades. A conference for the parents/guardians of sixth grade students will be scheduled at the end of the first marking period. The Home Access Center will be updated at the end of each marking period to reflect the final marking period grade. No paper report cards will be distributed. Families will be notified when those grades are available. Letter grades of “A” through “F” are used in grading students in all subjects at the middle school.

A Notice of Current Failure may be mailed at any time during the marking period to notify the student-parent/guardian of a possible failure for the marking period.

SCHOOL DANCES

School dances are scheduled through student council and the school administration. The number and variety of school dances will depend upon careful consideration of many factors. School dances are not held for the purpose of making money, but to afford each student an opportunity to enjoy companionship and fun with fellow classmates. Dances must end no later than 9:30 p.m. Dances will be attended in regular school attire. No semi-formal or formal wear will be permitted unless otherwise indicated. Dance sponsors will apprise committees of the preceding guidelines. Final plans will be approved by the principal.
SCHOOL SPIRIT

School spirit is best demonstrated by the pride the students have in their school, its facilities, and teachers. This is evidenced by the students’ enthusiastic participation in school activities, their ability to win and lose gracefully in sporting events, and in their acceptance of established standards of behavior and responsibility.

SPORTS

INTERSCHOLASTIC

As part of a comprehensive interscholastic athletic program, the middle school offers the following to only the seventh and eighth grade students: Fall Season - field hockey, football, soccer, volleyball; Winter Season - basketball (boys and girls) and wrestling; Spring Season - baseball, softball, and track & field.

All middle schools are members of the Lower Bucks Junior High/Middle School Athletic League and the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (P.I.A.A.). Participation is the key factor in all of the athletic programs offered. Effective June 1, 2008, the P.I.A.A. implemented a one-year comprehensive physical examination effective from June 1 to May 31st of each year. All P.I.A.A. athletes will be required to comply with this regulation. Additionally, PIAA requires athletes to maintain academic eligibility. The coach of each individual sport, along with the athletic director, is responsible for determining eligibility.

INTRAMURALS

The middle school intramural athletic program is open to all 6th, 7th, and 8th graders and is designed for students who do not wish to participate on interscholastic athletic teams. The goals are to provide a wide variety of activities to encourage individual and large group participation, and to provide meaningful experiences for our students.

A variety of activities are offered for middle school students during the fall, winter, and spring seasons.

STUDENT CONDUCT POLICY

Rules, regulations, and procedures detailed in the Student Conduct Policy Booklet will be discussed with all students during the first weeks of school.

By working together, we can ensure a successful and satisfying school experience.

STUDENT COUNCIL

The student council is comprised of elected representatives from the student body in grades 6, 7, and 8. The student council has an important role. Its purpose is to serve as a student forum, a place where students can assume as much of the responsibility of organizing their school activities as possible.

Student council goals as outlined in its constitution are - (1) to develop attitudes of, and practices in, good citizenship; (2) to improve student-teacher relationships; (3) to provide a forum for students, and (4) to promote the general welfare of the school.
**STUDENT INSURANCE**

Group accident insurance will be available. Complete information about insurance plans and payments will be made available on the first day of school. Pennsbury is not in the business of selling insurance, but the School District gives you the opportunity to take advantage of reliable, reasonably-priced coverage should students need it.

**SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS**

When teachers become ill or have emergencies, substitute teachers then conduct their classes. The substitute teacher follows the regular teacher’s plans. Students are expected to concentrate on the class work and to be cooperative and courteous. Students’ behavior will reflect upon the class, your regular teacher, and your middle school.

**TECHNOLOGY**

All Pennsbury students in grades 6-12 will be assigned a Chromebook for the 2018-2019 school year. Families are responsible for a fee of $40 to cover insurance costs. Students are required to bring the Chromebook to school fully charged each day. Chromebooks are to be used both at school, during the instructional day, and at home, to complete homework and other at home assignments. Students will be assigned an email account for school use only.

The use of all district technology must be in support of the educational program and must be consistent with the educational objectives of the Pennsbury School District. Teachers will utilize web services which have been approved by the Pennsbury School District and are compliant with Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act. Students are prohibited from playing games, visiting unauthorized websites and using Pennsbury devices for non-instructional purposes.

**TELEPHONES**

No telephoning will be permitted during class periods without the written permission of the teacher. Office phones are to be used for school business and emergencies only. Cell phones, while permitted in Pennsbury schools, are for emergencies only, and must be turned off and put away in hallway lockers at all times during the school day.

**TEXTBOOKS, SUPPLIES, & EQUIPMENT**

Textbooks, supplies, and equipment are purchased by the Board of School Directors and loaned to students, who are expected to take good care of public property. All textbooks are to be covered as soon as possible after they are received. If school book covers are not available, covers can be made from brown wrapping paper or by cutting up a large grocery bag. If you lose a book, inform your teacher so that another book can be provided. Students who mar, destroy, or lose textbooks will be responsible for paying the current purchase price for a replacement. This also applies to furniture and to other equipment. Any students who have lost or damaged School District property will be given a district monetary obligation.
TIME SCHEDULE

Students may enter the building at 7:50 a.m., go to their lockers, and report to homeroom. Morning exercises begin with “The Star Spangled Banner” and proceed to saluting the flag and reciting the “Pledge of Allegiance.” This is followed by the announcements of the day. The daily schedule will be explained to students by their teachers. The school day ends at 2:55 p.m.

There are three minutes between classes for passing. Punctuality is a virtue and a requirement. Get to class on time.

TRANSPORTATION ON MIDDLE SCHOOL CAMPUS

Students are transported via school bus for activities occurring during the school day. If a student should miss the intra-campus bus, he or she will need to report back to the teacher responsible for the activity or course, who will contact the office to make arrangements to transport the student back to the appropriate school. No student is permitted to walk between schools unsupervised.

VALUABLES

Students should not leave money or other valuables in their lockers. Students should avoid bringing large sums of money or valuables to school.

Students should not leave valuables such as watches, jewelry, or money in their gym lockers during physical education classes or during athletic practice of games. Teachers or coaches will store these items for students during those times.

The school will not be responsible for lost or stolen valuables.

VISITORS

All visitors to the building must report directly to the office.

Parents/guardians are welcome and may request to visit the school by calling on the phone, by coming to the office, or by writing to the Principal. Advance notice is necessary to ensure a rewarding visit and to minimize disruption.

Students from other school districts or from within the District are not permitted to visit.

WALKERS / BIKERS

Student walkers are not to walk on the roads or cut through the private property of people living around the school site. Existing sidewalks are to be used at all times. Students are expected to respect the property of others while walking to and from school. Bike riders are to use bike paths at all times, and not use the access parking lots between school buildings.
PROGRAM OF STUDIES

CORE ACADEMICS

MATHEMATICS

Sixth Grade: Introduction to Pre-Algebra, Pre-Algebra A, Pre-Algebra 1
Seventh Grade: Pre-Algebra 7, Pre-Algebra B, Algebra 1A, Algebra 1
Eighth Grade: Concepts of Algebra, Algebra 1A, Algebra 1B, Geometry

Placement in mathematics is based on a combination of factors including previous academic performance and standardized test results.

PRE-ALGEBRA

The Pre-Algebra curriculum is designed to move a student from a concrete understanding of numbers to an abstract understanding of algebraic concepts, and will include a review of computational skills. Students will continue to develop the ability to explore, conjecture, and reason logically. Students will be introduced to a variety of problem-solving skills through real-life situations. Emphasis will be placed on communicating through mathematical notation and written explanations.

CONCEPTS OF ALGEBRA

The Concepts of Algebra curriculum begins to develop the strong foundation of Algebra skills that all students need to be successful in high school Mathematics. Concepts include operations with real numbers, graphing in the coordinate plane, solving equations, solving inequalities, and an introduction to functions. Students will have the opportunity to construct logical arguments, compare quantities, hypothesize, and draw conclusions based upon algebraic, graphical, and/or numerical mathematical models.

ALGEBRA

The Algebra course is the foundation of all higher-level Mathematics. This course introduces students to all the dimensions of Algebra: its skills, properties, uses, and representations. The curriculum is based on various mathematical interpretations: written, visual, algebraic, graphical and numerical. Topics include: operations with real numbers, uses of variables, linear sentences, problem solving, slope, exponents, quadratic equations, polynomials, linear systems, and factoring. All of these topics are applied to real life situations. Scientific and graphing calculators (TI-83 plus, TI-84 plus) will be utilized when appropriate.

GEOMETRY

The Geometry curriculum aims to develop mathematical skills and reasoning abilities needed for spatial problem solving. It provides opportunities for higher order thinking skills by analyzing and discovering geometric relationships. This course introduces students to the study of points, lines, planes, and space. Topics include logic, proof, transformations, congruence, similarity, symmetry, measurement, and coordinate geometry. Scientific and graphing calculators (TI-83 plus, TI-84 plus) will be utilized when appropriate.
Students in grades 6, 7, and 8 who are in need of continued developmental Math skills will receive specially-designed instruction based on their needs. This instruction may be delivered by the classroom teacher, the building Math Specialist, or other staff. All remedial programs are scientific, research-based programs designed and implemented to meet the individual needs of students.

**READING & ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS**

The middle school Language Arts program promotes language as a major tool in acquiring and using knowledge and provides opportunities for students to practice language skills through participation as a reader, writer, speaker, and listener. Through selected literature, students are exposed to a variety of literary genre and given a strong foundation for future literature courses. Composition skills are developed through frequent writing opportunities utilizing the complete Writing Process, on-going revision of previous works, and assessment of needs based upon teacher, peer, and self-evaluation. The program is designed to foster ever-increasing independence in reading and processes, including reading to learn. Thematic units are used to develop comprehension skills, content area reading skills, and study skills. Reading is the key to much of the learning that takes place in school and in life.

Students in grades 6, 7, and 8 who are in need of continued developmental reading skills will receive specially-designed instruction based on their needs. This instruction may be delivered by the classroom teacher, the building Reading Specialist, or other staff. All remedial programs are scientific, research-based programs designed and implemented to meet the individual needs of students.

**SCIENCE**

The 6th grade Science program includes topics such as ecology, astronomy, cells, genetics, and heredity. All topics include hands-on laboratory work that emphasizes process skills and inquiry for the students. The program stimulates the students to use scientific processes to solve everyday problems.

The 7th grade Science program is centered on the study of Earth and matter. Topics include rocks and minerals, weather, water, oceans, earthquakes, and basic chemistry. The program is characterized by its emphasis on experiments and student activities as well as textbook readings. It is intended to encourage open inquiry, use of lab materials, observations, interpretation of data, and drawing conclusions.

The 8th grade Science program is centered on the study of the human body, chemistry interactions, and the classification of organisms. The topics are studied in relation to the total environment rather than as isolated items. This level of study is characterized by laboratory work and the interpretation of the data gathered.

The 6th, 7th, and 8th grade programs are based on the Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Environment and Ecology and the Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Science and Technology. All three programs were developed to assist the middle school student to use process skills to solve problems.

**SOCIAL STUDIES**

Social Studies in the middle school gives the student an opportunity to study world history and culture; the importance of geography in human development; and the rise of the American nation.

The 6th and 7th grade courses survey the historical and cultural development of western
and non-Western civilizations. This survey begins with the prehistoric and ancient periods in 6th grade and concludes with the modern period in 7th grade. The 8th grade course examines the development of American history from the revolutionary period to the late 19th century. This course will also give special attention to citizenship education as it relates to an understanding of the American government and democratic ideals.

All three programs will develop geographic understanding and literacy, along with the development of study skills, research skills, and critical thinking skills.

## WORLD LANGUAGES

For half a year, most 8th grade students will complete an introductory course in French, German, and Spanish. These language classes are designed to help each student make an informed language choice upon entering high school. Students will experience language and culture through a communicative language approach, emphasizing both listening and speaking skills.

## GIFTED PROGRAM

The Pennsbury Middle Schools offer a variety of services to gifted students. This includes participation in the talent pool Language Arts program in grades 6 and 7 and talent pool English in grade 8. Gifted students also enroll in a 45-day gifted seminar course in each of the grades in which critical thinking, communication, research, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) topics are emphasized. Emphasis in the core subjects is on the development of higher-level thinking skills and creativity through enrichment activities and problem solving. Placement in the gifted program follows the guidelines as defined in Chapter 16 of the Pennsylvania School Code.

## EXPRESSIVE ARTS

## APPLIED ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY

Technology Education in the middle school is a field of study involving the application of learned principles to tangible solutions. Students learn techniques in design and engineering and participate in practical problem-solving experiences during their rotation through Graphic Communications and Fundamentals of Technology. The Graphic Communications curriculum encompasses printing, silk-screening, and graphic design. When students are in the Fundamentals of Technology, they learn engineering design, production, prototyping, and design evaluation. Throughout both courses, the areas of technology will be explored at increasing levels of difficulty.
ART

The goal of the Pennsbury middle school Art program is to implement a discipline-based curriculum that incorporates Art History, Art Criticism, Aesthetics, and Art Production. The program aims to provide varied experiences and exploration necessary for development of a personal mode of self-expression and the refinement of perception and appreciation. Additionally, the program encourages further study in the fine arts and/or related crafts.

The general emphasis in 6th grade centers around the theme of Art and its relationship to nature. In 7th grade, the theme is Art and its relationship to man, while 8th graders study Art as a personal statement.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCE

The middle school Family and Consumer Science program is a broad, general, introductory experience and is presented in a co-educational environment. The curriculum has been developed to meet the social, psychological, and intellectual needs of this age group. The topics at each grade level focus on foods and nutrition, consumer education, career exploration, clothing, financial literacy, and human development. Theory and practical experiences are presented with emphasis on everyday living.

MUSIC

Music is provided for all students at every level. All units taught combine music skills, history, and activities through experimental learning, and are presented in a cumulative structure throughout middle school.

An opportunity is provided for all middle school students to participate in the orchestra, band, and chorus. These music organizations perform at Winter and Spring concerts, assembly programs, and elementary school presentations.

Weekly instrumental music lessons are provided for band and orchestra members. Participation in music activities enables students to become involved in other musical arenas, such as ensembles, Honors Band, Chorus, and Orchestra, and Bucks County Band, Chorus, and Orchestra.

T.I.M.S.

Thriving In Middle School is offered to all 6th grade students as one of their Expressive Arts subjects. The T.I.M.S. course was designed to help students make a smooth and successful transition to middle school. Each student participates in a 30-day rotation that includes topics such as: an orientation to middle school, organizational and study skills, self-esteem, friendship, bullying, and peaceful conflict resolution.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The daily Physical Education program that is offered in middle school focuses on contemporary activities designed to motivate and encourage maximum participation. A strong emphasis is placed on fostering a positive and nurturing environment where students can achieve success as both an individual and as a group member.
HEALTH EDUCATION

Topics such as drug and alcohol prevention, smoking, disease control, human reproduction, wellness, and nutrition will be covered in 6th through 8th grades. The course work is designed to follow and meet the National Health Education Standards. Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease, and learn to access valid health information and health-promoting products and services. Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and reduce health risks. Analysis of the influence of culture, media, technology, and other factors on health will help students use goal-setting, decision-making, and interpersonal skills to enhance health. Students will also advocate for personal, family, and community health.
1. **What is the basis for middle schools?**
   Middle school is a transition from elementary to high school. The middle level provides a structure for decision making during preadolescent and adolescent developmental stages.

2. **What age/grade levels are included in Pennsbury’s middle schools?**
   Pennsbury’s middle schools consist of grades 6, 7 and 8. Students generally range in ages from 11 to 15 years old.

3. **What is the organizational structure of the middle school?**
   The middle schools are organized on a team concept. Students are associated with a team of two to five academic core teachers. All middle school students participate in exploratory courses.

4. **What are the academic core subjects at the middle level?**
   Please refer to page 12 of this booklet.

5. **What are interdisciplinary units of study?**
   Interdisciplinary units are effective curricular strategies for helping students see the connections and integration of subject areas. Teachers integrate two or more subject areas to develop a concept or theme.

6. **What are exploratory subjects?**
   Exploratory subjects are part of each middle level student’s course schedule. The duration of each exploratory, special area or expressive arts course ranges from 30 to 45 days. They are: Family and Consumer Science, Art, Music, Applied Engineering and Technology, Thriving in Middle School (only grade 6) and Foreign Language (only grade 8). Physical Education is part of a daily schedule which includes a health component.

7. **When my child is in middle school, who can I contact for further information?**
   As a parent/guardian, you may have questions regarding various aspects of your child’s middle school experience. If it is a question that can be addressed to one teacher, please contact that person. If it is a team-related concern, you may contact your child’s school counselor, who can research the question. School counselors are primary contacts for other types of questions.

8. **Are there planned transition activities for parents/guardians and children from elementary to middle school?**
   There are a number of activities in place to help students transition to middle school. These include a visit and tour to the middle school, a parent orientation night and tour, and an opportunity to visit the school prior to the new school year to visit the homeroom and try out a locker. In addition, the first day of school, 8/27/18, will be designated as an orientation day for sixth grade students only.

9. **Are there extra-curricular activities available?**
   There are a number of extra-curricular activities available to students. Intramural sports and other opportunities are discussed at the beginning of each new season. Please refer to the school website to learn about specific offerings each season. Each school offers a yearbook and a musical as well.
10. As a parent/guardian, I’ve been actively involved in the elementary school. Are there opportunities for me, as a parent/guardian, to be involved?

Participation by parents/guardians in each child’s middle school experience is encouraged. Through PTO, team, and individual teachers, homework and project supervision, attendance, or supervisory support at various school events, parents/guardians provide an essential component to the educational program. A daily conversation with your child about the day’s events at school is the best way to stay current with what is happening.

11. How are students grouped for instruction?

At the middle level, students are organized by ability and performance for Math instruction. In 6th grade, students are grouped for Introduction to Pre-Algebra, PreAlgebra A (first year of a two year program) or Pre-Algebra I (the entire pre-algebra course in one year). Students in the Gifted Seminar program are grouped together for Language Arts in 6th and 7th grade and English in 8th grade. Science, Social Studies, and Reading instruction (for 8th graders) is provided in a full range of ability (heterogeneous) setting.

12. Are there programs for students needing support?

Yes, support programs are provided to help students be more successful. Recognizing that student INTEREST, EFFORT and WORK ETHIC are essential elements for success, additional support is available through:

- **Pupil Achievement Teachers:** part-time tutors assigned to a specific grade. They assist students with organizational, study and test taking skills, as well as academic support.
- **Learning Support:** a special education academic support program for identified students.
- **Mentally Gifted:** an academic seminar program for identified students.
- **Thriving In Middle School:** a component of the exploratory offerings, at sixth grade, which provides help with organizational and study skills. A DARE component is included. The TIMS teacher also serves as a special case crisis counselor.
- **Mentor Programs:** adults and older students from the community and within Pennsbury schools work with individual students to improve success at middle school.
- **Guidance Services:** counselors at each middle school are accessed by student appointment or parent contact.
- **Child Psychologist and Social Worker:** resources available through the guidance office.
- **Student Assistance Program:** referrals, to assist students experiencing more severe difficulty, can be made by students, teachers or parents/guardians.
- **Reading Interventions:** students requiring reading support will be involved in a variety of reading intervention programs.
- **Math Interventions:** students requiring Math support will be involved in a variety of Math intervention programs.

13. How can I keep informed as to my child’s performance level in middle school?

There are several ways for you to keep informed of your child’s progress:

- **Talk with your child on a daily basis.** This is the best form of communication.
- **Formal report cards are available on the Home Access Center every 45 days.**
- **Please check progress reports and the Home Access Center throughout the marking period.**
- **Check your child’s assignment planner.** Teachers expect students to use it every day.
- **Arrange phone conferences with individual teachers or school counselor.**
- **Conferences with your child’s team of teachers can be scheduled, when appropriate.**
- **Attend parent/guardian-teacher conferences, which are scheduled in November for all 6th grade students.**
14. **What assessments are used to evaluate my child’s progress?**

   Progress is assessed in a variety of ways. Among those most commonly used are:
   teacher observation, teacher-made and commercially-written tests, portfolios, projects, and
   performance-based assessments, standardized District and state tests.

15. **What changes can I expect in my child as he/she progresses through middle school?**

   As your child progresses through middle school, you can expect him/her to go through physical,
   social, emotional, intellectual and moral developmental stages. A discussion regarding these
   changes is presented at the Spring Parent/Guardian Orientation Program.

16. **Please explain the daily schedule cycle:**

   Each of the middle schools operates on a fixed schedule with a five-day cycle, which designates
   the assigned resource period at the end of each day. Students involved in Chorus, Band, or
   Orchestra are scheduled for rehearsals on designated days of the cycle.

17. **What can my child and I expect regarding discipline and safety at the middle school?**

   Each middle school student is given a copy of the Pennsbury Student Conduct Policy and each
   student is expected to behave appropriately. Each middle school administration follows the
   procedures as stated. It is important for you to know that maintaining a safe learning environment
   is a priority in each middle school. Violations of the conduct expectations are handled immediately
   and fairly.

18. **How are student Math placements determined?**

   Administrators and teachers decide upon 6th grade Math placement based on multiple criteria
   including standardized test results and report card grades. Students are scheduled for Introduction
   to Pre-Algebra, Pre-Algebra A, or Pre-Algebra 1, based on these criteria.