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Academics & Curriculum

How can I stay informed about what my child is learning in school?

We get it! Pre-teens aren't always a font of information when asked what they did at school. To keep you in the loop, a member of each grade-level team sends out a one-page weekly update via ParentSquare. This document outlines what students are learning in their core classes, highlights upcoming tests, projects, or assignment due dates, and shares class-specific announcements.

My child rarely seems to have homework. Is this normal?

Generally, yes. While consistent practice is essential to academic progress, our philosophy at DMS is that the best place to practice is in the classroom alongside the teacher. Classroom practice allows students to ask questions and receive real-time feedback when it matters most. While occasional homework may be assigned, especially if a student was absent or needs to finish work not completed during class, formal homework assignments are intentionally few and far between.

Why are 5th, 6th, and 7th graders required to take music?

As students progress through middle school, they receive more freedom to choose classes that match their interests. At DMS, we believe a well-rounded education includes rich exposure to the arts. Students in grades 5–7 choose between choir, band, or both. In 8th grade, students may choose to continue with music or replace it with Introduction to Spanish.

What is the “Life Skills” class on my child’s schedule?

A recent survey of our students in grades 5–12 painted a clear picture: students want to learn practical skills! Sewing, banking, basic home maintenance, and nutrition are essential adult topics that aren't typically covered in state academic standards. In this hands-on, 9-week class, students explore these real-world life skills once during the school year.

How and when are students accelerated in math at DMS?

Math acceleration is a data-informed, collaborative decision made in partnership with the student, parents, teachers, and the building principal. Students are considered for math acceleration when they consistently earn an A or B in math, achieve an Advanced rating on the Ohio State Test (OST), and show strong performance on MAP diagnostic assessments. Due to the structure of Ohio Math Standards, students are very rarely accelerated prior to 6th grade.

Does DMS offer specialized instruction for students identified as gifted?

Yes. Core teachers who instruct students identified as gifted within their subject area write specific goals tailored to meet those students' unique learning needs. If you have questions about gifted status or specialized instruction, feel free to contact the building principal or the teacher specializing in your child's identified area.

Are any courses at DMS offered for high school or college credit?

DMS students who take Algebra I or math courses beyond Algebra I earn high school credit, and these grades are calculated into their high school GPA. College credit courses are not offered at DMS.

Academic Progress & Student Support

How can I monitor my child's academic progress?

ProgressBook is our primary platform for academic updates. On ProgressBook, you can view current grades and assignments, and even set up customized alerts to notify you if an assignment is missing or if a grade falls below a specific threshold. You can access ProgressBook through the Dalton Local Schools website under Parent Links. Login instructions are sent to all families at the start of each school year, and our office staff is always happy to assist you. Parents are also welcome to reach out to teachers directly at any time and attend parent-teacher conferences twice each year.

Where can I view report cards and standardized testing results?

Hard copies of report cards and standardized test results are sent home at specific points throughout the year, but you can also view them anytime on ProgressBook, which is located on the district website under Parent Links. If you need assistance accessing your account, please contact the DMS main office.

Will a teacher contact me directly if my child is struggling academically?

Teachers make every effort to communicate whenever a student is struggling. However, we find that every family defines "struggling" a little differently. Because every family has unique expectations for academic performance, teachers share ongoing academic updates through ProgressBook and weekly newsletters. When direct outreach is needed, teachers will initiate personal contact via phone call, email, or a requested conference based on their professional judgment.

What steps should I take if I have a concern about my student's grades or overall progress?

Start by reviewing your child's ProgressBook account, then reach out directly to the classroom teacher. Our teachers value working hand-in-hand with families to ensure student success. Communication works best when approached as a collaborative problem-solving partnership, where respectful dialogue and shared goals guide the conversation.

Does DMS offer tutoring or extra academic help?

Supporting student achievement is at the heart of what we do! Beyond regular classroom instruction, we offer multiple layers of academic help. Built directly into Math and English Language Arts (ELA) classes, "No New Teaching" blocks allow teachers to provide targeted support by either extending learning for advanced students or offering remediation where needed. Our 20-minute daily Advisory block provides dedicated time for focused academic support on specific concepts or assignments. Additionally, each Friday during lunch and recess, core teachers are available during DogPound to meet with students individually or in small groups for additional retaking, reteaching, and practice.

What support services are available if my child is struggling with anxiety or mental health?

Middle school is a period of growth and change, and no student has to navigate it alone. Students can always reach out to any trusted adult in our building. Our School Counselor, Mrs. Carathers, provides a welcoming

presence to help students navigate organizational habits, study skills, friendship dynamics, and everyday social challenges. For students who need more structured mental health care, our on-staff clinical counselor offers individual therapeutic support during the school day if desired and determined necessary in a collaborative decision with families.

Student Development, Behavior & Culture

What is a PBIS Bash?

A PBIS Bash is our monthly celebration of positive choices! Held on the final Friday of each month, students build community during an hour of free choice at the end of the day. Activities range from open-gym basketball and video games to cooking, karaoke, and flag football. It's a fun way to reinforce an important life lesson: when we handle our responsibilities first, we earn more time for the things we love to do!

What is a Bulldog Pride Recognition?

It's easy for positive behaviors to go unnoticed when students quietly do the right thing day after day. Bulldog Pride Recognitions highlight those everyday champions. Teachers award simple "Bulldog Pride" tickets when they catch a student demonstrating kindness, showing improvement on a tough skill, or consistently putting in great effort. Students drop their tickets in the main office to enter a weekly Friday prize drawing.

What events or school traditions make DMS unique?

DMS works hard to make the middle school years memorable! 6th graders participate in a week-long, overnight outdoor learning adventure at Camp Wanake every May, which is a beloved 50+ year Dalton tradition. 8th graders take a three day trip to Washington, D.C. and Gettysburg each October. We also host evening school dances for 7th and 8th graders in the fall and spring, along with seasonal outings like our 5th and 6th grade roller-skating day in December!

My child is suddenly moodier, more sensitive, and experiencing friendship "drama." This never happened in elementary school. Why is this happening?

Welcome to the middle school years! Between ages 10 and 14, young people experience massive brain development, physical growth, and new social relationships. Pre-teens naturally begin seeking independence, testing boundaries, and placing greater focus on peer relationships. Sometimes these changes are subtle, and sometimes they are sudden. Please take to heart that this is a completely normal developmental phase and we welcome you to partner with our staff to support your middle schoolers through these transitional years with encouragement, boundaries, structure, and above all, patience.

What is "Advisory" on my child's schedule, and how does it fit into my child's day?

To ensure students have dedicated time to stay on top of their work and get targeted help, DMS has created a daily 20-minute Advisory Period right before lunch and recess, facilitated by grade-level core teachers. This block provides structured, focused work time for students to finish assignments or prepare for upcoming assessments before taking a mid-day break. It is also used for special programming, including character-building lessons, school-wide PBIS activities, Student Council updates, and grade-level class meetings.

What is the "Dog Pound"?

Operating Monday through Thursday, the Dog Pound is a structured, supervised space during lunch and recess where students can complete missing assignments, retake assessments, or serve a detention. Attendance in the Dog Pound for academic completion is strictly supportive, while assignment to the Dog Pound for behavior is a disciplinary event for which parents are always contacted directly. On Fridays, all 7th and 8th grade core teachers are available to assist students during Dog Pound as needed. At DMS, we deeply value social time and physical movement during recess. Our goal is to prompt and encourage students to manage their class time effectively and follow school rules such that they will rarely need to visit the Dog Pound.

What is a “Phonebox,” and why can’t my child keep their phone in their pocket or locker?

Ohio law (HB 96) now requires public schools to prohibit phone use during the school day, and DMS recognizes that students thrive when they disconnect from personal screens. Upon arrival, students report briefly to their 10th-period classroom to place their phone in a central, secured "Phonebox", where devices remain safe until the final dismissal bell. Students then report to their Homeroom. Removing personal devices has greatly reduced digital distractions, behavioral referrals, technology related misconduct against others, and encourages face-to-face communication. You can support your student and our school by not texting your child during the school day. If you need to reach your child, simply call our main office and we will connect you. Please also know that no matter where a student is in our building, they are always just a few steps away from a school landline.

I was contacted about a behavioral concern, but my child’s account is very different from what was reported to me. How should I handle this?

When a staff member contacts you regarding a behavior issue, their goal is to keep you informed and work as a collaborative partner. Staff members step away from their primary duties to report observed events, aim to gather complete facts, and communicate with an emphasis on problem-solving. Because details can sometimes be missed or misinterpreted in the moment, we encourage parents to speak directly with the reporting staff member or building administrator. Reaching out directly to the school staff members involved helps clarify details and allows us to work together constructively.

Daily Operations & Extracurriculars

What time can my student arrive at DMS in the morning, and how late can they stay after school?

Main doors open at 7:15 AM each morning. Please note that staff supervision does not begin until 7:15 AM. The school day ends at 2:35 PM, and students are expected to exit the building promptly at dismissal unless they are participating in a supervised, school-sponsored after-school activity.

What extracurricular activities and clubs are offered at DMS?

We offer a wide variety of ways for students to get involved! For clubs and leadership, students can participate in Student Council, Welcome Pack, Altman Ambassadors (which focuses on healthy habits), or rotating Tuesday afternoon clubs open to all grades. For 7th and 8th graders, athletic opportunities include football, volleyball, cross country, and cheerleading in the fall; basketball, wrestling, and cheerleading in the winter; and track and field in the spring.

What are the eligibility requirements for middle school athletes?

To participate in OHSA middle school athletics in 7th and 8th grade, student-athletes must pass at least five courses in the preceding grading period, have a current completed physical form on file, be under 15 years of age prior to August 1st, and be within their four-consecutive-semester limit starting in 7th grade. For full guidelines, please review the OHSA Eligibility Resource Center website.

What is the school drop-off and pick-up procedure?

To keep our traffic flowing smoothly and protect student safety, please stay in the single vehicle drop-off line and pull all the way forward to the white striped area before letting your student out. Never pass or pull around other vehicles in the loop. If you need to enter the parking lot in order to drop off your child, please park in a marked space and consider walking your student across the traffic lane to the entrance doors.

Communication & Parent Resources

Who should I contact if I have an update about my child, or a general question or concern?

For the quickest resolution, please direct your inquiries to the staff member closest to the situation. For questions regarding building operations, policy, or general academics or behavioral needs contact the building principal, Dr. Paul Jackson at pjackson@daltonlocal.org. For the athletic department, contact Athletic Director Mrs. Greer at agreer@daltonlocal.org. For main office, transportation updates and general questions, contact DMS Secretary Mrs. Troyer at stroyer@daltonlocal.org or 330.828.2405 opt.3. For student health and medical concerns, contact School Nurse Mrs. Rowley at krowley@daltonlocal.org. For questions or concerns pertaining to a specific classroom, please reach out directly to the individual teacher via ParentSquare or email listed on the district website. Directing specific questions to the immediate staff member (e.g. reaching out to a coach regarding 8th-grade football or a math teacher regarding a math grade) ensures you get accurate information as quickly as possible.

Where can I learn more about my child's teachers?

We love connecting with our families! You can visit each teacher's personalized Teacher Page by visiting the Dalton Local Schools Website under the DMS tab.

Can parents view the daily DMS morning announcements?

Yes! Daily announcements are recorded and uploaded via an embedded YouTube video on the DMS page of our district website by approximately 7:00 AM each morning.

How will I be notified in the event of a school closure or delay?

District closures and delays are broadcast through ParentSquare alerts via text, email, and app notifications, local radio and television news channels, the official Dalton Local Schools Facebook page, and an alert banner displayed at the top of the district website homepage.

What is the proper process if I disagree with a school rule, procedure, or decision?

Public schools belong to the community they serve, and we recognize that questions or concerns regarding rules and decisions naturally arise. If you disagree with a policy or decision, we ask that you reach out in good faith to the staff member directly responsible for that area so we can engage in constructive dialogue. For building-level procedures, please contact Dr. Paul Jackson at pjackson@daltonlocal.org.

