



Welcome to Parker! Below is a glossary of terms, resources and general information that will familiarize you with Parker vernacular that you are sure to hear in upcoming weeks! These are alphabetized for easy reference.

Academic Divisions

Parker consists of four academic divisions: Lower School, Intermediate School, Middle School and Upper School. Each division has their own administration—with the exception of the Intermediate and Middle Schools who share leadership—who report to our Principal Dan Frank.

Lower School (LS)

Parker's Lower School consists of Junior Kindergarten (JK), Senior Kindergarten (SK), 1st grade, 2nd grade and 3rd grade. Head of Lower School Kimeri Swanson-Beck, Assistant Head of Lower School Ashleigh St. Peters and Lower School Coordinator Gretchen Kaluzny lead all aspects that are specific to the Lower School.

Intermediate School (IS)

Parker's Intermediate School consists of 4th grade and 5th grade. Head of Intermediate and Middle Schools Vahn Phayprasert, Intermediate and Middle Schools Dean of Student Life Anthony Shaker and Intermediate and Middle School Coordinator and Director of Activities Tierra Moore lead all aspects that are specific to the Intermediate School.

Middle School (MS)

Parker's Middle School consists of 6th grade, 7th grade and 8th grade. Head of Intermediate and Middle Schools Vahn Phayprasert, Intermediate and Middle Schools Dean of Student Life Anthony Shaker and Intermediate and Middle School Coordinator and Director of Activities Tierra Moore lead all aspects that are specific to the Middle School.

Upper School (US)

Parker's Upper School consists of 9th grade, 10th grade, 11th grade and 12th grade. Head of Upper School Cory Zeller, Upper School Dean of Student Life Joe Bruno and Upper School Coordinator Rolanda Shepard lead all aspects that are specific to the Upper School.

Athletics

[Parker's athletics program](#) emphasizes the positive development of student-athletes and aims to help them maximize their athletic potential while establishing lifelong habits of fitness, teamwork and leadership skills. Interscholastic competition sports are offered in 6th–12th grade in three seasons: Fall, Winter and Spring. Parker is a member of the Independent School League conference. Parker's Athletics Department is led by Director of Athletics Nick Kocsis, CMAA and Assistant Director of Athletics Cynthia Klucznyk and Assistant . The Athletics Calendar, found in the Parker Portal, consists of both competitions and practices for each sport. You can subscribe to all athletic competitions or the full calendars for individual sports. Instructions are available in the Portal Help Documents within the Resource Board. Contact techhelp@fwparker.org if you have trouble subscribing to Athletics calendars within the Parker Portal.

Blue Calendar

The Blue Calendar contains all events across all divisions (with the exception of Athletics). The Blue Calendar is your best reference tool for important all-school events like County Fair, grade-specific events like the 5th Grade Dubbing Ceremony and all days when school is not in session. Instructions for how to access and subscribe to the Blue Calendar can be found [here](#).

Bridge Programs

The Bridge Programs are designed to help Middle and Upper School students with transitioning to their new respective divisions.

Middle School

All 6th Grade students attend a transition program at Parker to introduce them to the community, the building and opportunities available to them during the school year.

Upper School

New to Parker 9th–12th Grade students attend a transition program to introduce them to the community, the building and life as an Upper School student.

Class Placements

In mid-August, you will receive a “Back to School” email from your Division Head(s) with links to your child(ren)’s class or advisory placements. You will be able to view these placements and class/advisory student lists in the Portal.

Activities, Ally and Affinity Groups and Clubs

Parker's clubs and activities provide students with exciting opportunities to develop their passion for exploring and investigating the world around them. Before, during or after school, these groups gather to discuss, participate and engage in various activities across all three divisions. More information about clubs and activities can be found [here](#). Additionally, Parker offers ally and affinity groups that provide time and space for students and parents and guardians with similar identities to come together in a safe environment to discuss their experiences and explore their identities. A list of these groups can be found [here](#).

Curriculum Night

These evening events take place each fall and provide parents and guardians an important opportunity to hear from their child(ren)'s teachers about the curriculum for their class. Dates and times for Curriculum Nights vary by grade, so please refer to the Blue Calendar.

Drop-off and Pick-Up

The "Back to School" email in mid-August will provide specific school start and end times, as well as drop-off and pick-up procedures for each grade.

Food Service

Parker's cafeteria is run by Quest Food Management Services, led by Chef Zac Maness. Quest provides fresh, high-quality food and personal service to Parker families and employees. Quest's food philosophy guides their approach to wholesome, scratch-made food, and their culinary leaders deliver a tailored dining experience to the unique needs of the Parker community. You can learn more about Quest at questfms.com. Student cafeteria services vary according to grade level; see divisional welcome information. Breakfast is available to parents/guardians, students and employees from 7–9 a.m. daily. The lunch menu is posted every week in "This Week @ Parker" (see below) and at fwparker.org/lunch to allow for proper planning. We encourage families with food allergies and/or food intolerances to contact Chef Zac at zmaness@fwparker.org with questions.

Grade Chairs

Grade Chairs are parent and guardian leaders (six per grade in Middle and Upper School and two per classroom in the Lower and Intermediate School) under the umbrella of the Parents' Association who facilitate communication, foster community and support grade- or class-level volunteerism. Specific tasks and workload vary by grade and teachers' needs, but always include planning a grade-level parent/guardian potluck and parent/guardian night out. Any current parents or guardians are eligible to be a Grade Chair. Grade Chair selection is completed in the Spring and Summer for the upcoming school year. More information about the role and the selection process can be found [here](#).

Grandparent and Special Friend Events

Throughout the school year, grandparents and special friends—adult friends or other relatives of those students whose grandparents are unable to attend—are invited to campus to enjoy different events with their grandchildren/special friends.

Grandparents' and Special Friends' Breakfast at County Fair

Grandparents and special friends of students in JK–12th grade are invited to come to a short breakfast before the fair while students set up their booths. After breakfast, all are welcome to join in the festivities of the fair.

Dinner and a Movie with Your Grandchild/Special Friend

Grandparents and special friends of students in JK–5th grade are invited to come to dinner and a movie at the school.

Upper School Grandparents' and Special Friends' Day

Grandparents and special friends of students in 9th–12th grade are invited to share in Upper School life at Parker.

Lower School Grandparents' and Special Friends' Day

Grandparents and special friends of students in JK–2nd grade are invited to share in Lower School life at Parker.

Grandparents with students in grades 4th–8th grade may be invited to their grade-specific performances/events. Note: To have your child(ren)'s grandparent(s) invited to these events and other school events, please fill out the grandparent information form in the Parker Portal.

Parents' Association (PA)

The Parents' Association is composed of all parents and guardians—including you! The PA's mission is to cultivate a vibrant parent community that engages everyone in the life of the school. The PA's goals are to foster community, support volunteerism and facilitate communication between parents and the school. The Parents' Association has regularly scheduled meetings on various topics that are open to the entire parent and guardian community. Parents' Association meeting dates can be found on the Blue Calendar.

Parker Fund

The Parker Fund is Parker's annual fund that supports the school's operational budget for the current school year. While tuition and fees are Parker's largest sources of revenue, each year the school requires additional funds to provide an exceptional education for every student, creating a gap between the total cost of a Parker education and the cost of tuition. The primary source of support to bridge this gap is provided through annual tax-deductible gifts to the Parker Fund. These contributions provide us with the resources to attract and maintain world-class teachers; provide exceptional educational programming, facilities and technology; and ensure that Parker remains a community composed of many backgrounds and perspectives.

Parent/Guardian Participation Challenge

To help us reach 100% parent participation in Parker Fund giving and to inspire school spirit, each grade that reaches 80% participation by December 31 will win their choice of a fun, free and fully planned activity for all students, all parents or every family in that grade. Parents in the winning grades can vote on which activity they would like for their grade.

Parker Giving Week (October 14-17)

To jumpstart the Parker Fund efforts for the year, we have a fun giving week every October to raise awareness and encourage support. Every family who makes a contribution this year by Friday, October 17, will receive a limited edition Parker gift!

Parker Party

Parker Party is an annual special event that raises funds for financial assistance. The event is chaired by parent volunteers and serves as an opportunity for adults in our community to come together to enjoy a special evening, which includes good food, great fun and invaluable fundraising in support of our commitment to ensuring more students throughout Chicago are able to access a high quality education.

Parker Portal

The Portal is Parker's online information hub for families. Many resources, including an online community directory and items related to individual students and their classes are housed in the Portal.

Parker PM

Parker PM offers students in JK–5th grade, a fun after-school option that includes an array of organized indoor and outdoor activities coupled with opportunities for creative free play. Parker PM operates Monday–Friday following the school's academic calendar. The program begins at the end of the school day and ends at either 4:30 or 6 p.m. For more information, please visit the [Parker PM page](#).

Parker P.L.U.S.

Parker P.L.U.S. (Programs for Learning Unique Stuff) offers students in JK–5th grade opportunities to sign up for a variety of mini-classes in multi-week sessions, typically meeting once a week. There are three P.L.U.S. sessions each school year. Students do not need to attend Parker PM to participate in Parker P.L.U.S. classes. Classes run from the end of the school day until 4:30 p.m. For more information, please visit the [Parker P.L.U.S. page](#).

Parker Traditions

Below is a list of some highlighted Parker Traditions that you will hear about throughout the school year:

County Fair

This time-honored tradition is a school-wide fair organized and run by the students. It has been around since the school began and features activities, games, prizes and food. Each grade has a booth or role in the Fair. County Fair takes place the Friday before Indigenous People's Day. Parents are encouraged to attend, and school is dismissed early. Students in JK–5th grade must be accompanied by an adult. You will receive more information from the school about this fun event in the future.

Morning Exercise (Morning Ex/MX)

Students regularly attend assembly, most commonly known as "Morning Ex". These assemblies may be led by current students, teachers, administrators or outside speakers, including alumni, who present and share information and ideas with the school community. There are several traditional Morning Ex presentations that occur during the school year. If parents are invited, you will receive specific information as each one approaches. In the Lower and Intermediate Schools, students attend the programs that are age-appropriate.

Big Siblings Morning Ex

The tradition of Big Siblings is almost as old as Morning Exercise. The seniors enter to the music of bagpipes and sit facing the rest of the school. Two to four seniors at a time come forward to serve as the elder “siblings” for each class in Junior Kindergarten through 8th grade. During the rest of the year, it is not uncommon to observe a senior with a younger sibling listening to a story, reading, tutoring or assisting on a class trip.

Corinthians Morning Ex

The Corinthians Morning Ex has signified the beginning of the academic year since Parker’s founding in 1901. The traditional reading of Corinthians 12:14–26 and other inspiring texts reminds the assembled audience of the school’s essential commitment to the importance of each individual in community life and the value of community in the life of each individual. This annual gathering frequently includes music and the assembly of a mosaic “model home” to reinforce this concept.

Class Day Morning Ex

Class Day is Parker’s celebration of the last day of school. All parents are invited to congratulate the seniors as they march around the field. Seniors are then presented with a “key to the house”, which represents their ability to return to visit Parker. After this presentation, families are welcome to eat lunch and celebrate the end-of-year on the field.

This Week @ Parker

This Week @ Parker is a weekly email sent to all parents and guardians every Friday during the school year and serves as the best way to keep up with what’s going on at school. This email features stories about events that happened during the previous week, includes dates for upcoming events and links to important items such as emails sent during the week and next week’s lunch menu.