

+++++COLUMBIA MIDDLE SCHOOL

2026-2027



MISSION STATEMENT

Columbia Middle School's mission is to provide a safe, nurturing, academically challenging learning environment where students prepare to become responsible citizens in a culturally diverse society.

Raiders LEAD

L – Lifelong Learners

E – Exhibit Positive Behavior

A – Act Responsibly

D – Determined to Succeed

At CMS, we want students to be Respectful, Responsible, and Ready.

MIDDLE SCHOOL DAILY SCHEDULE

	Teacher	Time
1 st Period		
2 nd Period		
3 rd Period		
4 th Period		
5 th Period		
6 th Period		
7 th Period		

GRADING SYSTEM/REPORT CARDS

Letter grades will be assigned from according to formative and summative assessments as shown:

90-100 A	70-72	D
80-89 B	Below 70	F
73-79 C		

Report cards are issued at the conclusion of each grading period. Progress reports are sent four times during the school year; this will be during the fifth week of each grading period so students have four weeks remaining to improve grades. Please monitor grades through Parent Portal.

COURSE TYPES AND GRADE CALCULATIONS

Middle school students are enrolled in a variety of courses designed to support academic growth, exploration, and preparation for high school. These include core academic courses, Connections (elective) courses, and, in some cases, high school credit courses taken while enrolled in middle school. Grading practices vary slightly by course type, but all grades are based on consistent, district-wide expectations.

Core Academic Courses

Core courses include English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Most middle school core courses are year-long and include benchmark assessments.

Grades for core benchmark courses are calculated using:

- 40% Classroom Assignments
(classwork, practice, homework, and daily instructional tasks)
- 55% Assessments
(tests, quizzes, projects, and other major summative measures)
- 5% Benchmark Exams
(district benchmark assessments administered at designated times)

Connections and Non-Benchmark Courses

Connections courses provide students with opportunities in areas such as fine arts, physical education, technology, engineering, and computer science. Students rotate through Connections every nine weeks, and each course receives an individual grade.

Grades for Connections classes and other non-benchmark courses are calculated using:

- 40% Classroom Assignments
- 60% Assessments

High School Credit Courses Taken in Middle School

High Schools calculate the semester average for courses not requiring an EOC Test by assigning 80% to the semester average and 20% to the semester exam. One-half unit of credit shall be awarded for each course in which the semester average meets or exceeds the minimum passing score. End-of-Course Tests (EOC Tests) shall be used as the final exam in the courses assessed by an End-of-Course Test (EOC Test). Student scores must be recorded on individual student report cards. A student's numeric score on the End of Course Test (EOC Test) shall count as 20% of the student's numeric grade in the course assessed by the End of Course Test (EOC Test).

First Semester		Second Semester	
80% Classroom Grade	60% Assessments (55% classroom assessments, 5% Benchmark 1)	80% Classroom Grade	60% Assessments (55% classroom assessments, 5% benchmark 3)
	40% Classroom assignments		40% Classroom assignments

20% Final Exam or EOC	20% Final Exam or EOC
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Grades are reported at the end of each grading period, and progress reports are issued during the fifth week of each grading period. Parents and students are encouraged to monitor grades regularly through the Parent Portal.

Benchmark Assessments

Benchmark assessments are administered to monitor student progress toward meeting course standards throughout the school year. These assessments are administered every 9 weeks and provide teachers and students with valuable information to adjust instruction and support learning. In middle school, benchmark assessments are administered to each grade level in all core subject areas, helping ensure students are progressing appropriately and are prepared for future academic success.

District Common Semester Exams

For the 2026-2027 school year, District common semester exams are administered in Algebra, Spanish I, and Physical Science.

Georgia Milestones Assessments

Middle school students participate in the Georgia Milestones End-of-Grade (EOG) assessments in English Language Arts and Mathematics in grades 6–8, and in Science and Social Studies in grade 8. Students enrolled in select high school credit courses while in middle school, such as Algebra I, will take the corresponding Georgia Milestones End-of-Course (EOC) assessment for that subject.

Semester Exam Exemption

Students who have no disciplinary referrals resulting in out-of-school suspension or in-school suspension and no outstanding fines shall use the requirements below to determine their exam-exemption status.

- Students in middle school taking high school credit courses can exempt one final exam per semester. To exempt the final exam, the student must have an unweighted average of 90 or higher with up to 5 excused absences, or an unweighted average of 85 or higher with 3 excused absences.

Students who wish to exempt any exams must clear all fines and lunch charges. All textbooks, library books, uniforms, and/or materials assigned to the student must be turned in and/or all fees paid before permission to exempt is granted.

Transferring Credits from Homeschool or Non-Accredited School

Students who transfer into the county from a non-accredited institution or a home study program will be required to take EOC Tests or System-Developed Assessments to validate all coursework toward graduation.

English To Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program

The purpose of the ESOL program is to ensure that high school English Learners (ELs) increase their English language proficiency while earning high school credits. The English Language Proficiency (ELP) of each EL is determined upon enrollment and then assessed annually with the ACCESS for ELLs test. ESOL services are determined by the student's ELP level. ESOL courses develop academic language and the reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills needed for academic achievement.

Gifted Education Program

Gifted services in middle schools are provided through advanced content classes. Gifted students receive advanced content instruction in various courses, as determined by each school. If you have questions about the middle school gifted program, please contact the school counselor.

ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

The Columbia County School District commits to providing all stakeholders with equitable, accurate, specific, and timely information regarding student progress toward agreed-upon common course expectations. Our district's guiding assessment practices include the following:

- Grading practices will be equitable, specific, and supportive of student learning.
- Grades will be based on students' level of mastery of standards to accurately communicate achievement.
- Formative assessments, including descriptive feedback, will be provided throughout the learning process to improve and/or guide instruction and to inform student progress toward mastery of standards.
- Summative assessments will be the greatest determining factor for demonstrating mastery of standards.

- Students will have multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency and use timely feedback to improve their performance or grade.

Grading Practices

Middle school courses in the Columbia County School District are primarily graded on a year-long basis. Grades earned throughout the school year reflect student progress and achievement over time.

Courses taken for high school credit while enrolled in middle school are graded on a semester system. These grades are calculated at the end of each semester and become part of the student's official high school transcript.

In addition to academic courses, middle school students participate in Connections classes covering fine arts, physical education, engineering, technology, and computer science. Students rotate through different Connections classes every nine weeks, and each Connections course receives an individual grade based on student performance during that grading period.

These grading practices are designed to support student growth, provide meaningful feedback, and ensure accuracy as students prepare for success in high school and beyond.

Grade Reporting

Grades are determined using formative and summative assessment data to accurately reflect student learning and achievement. Report cards are issued at the end of each grading period. Progress reports are distributed four times each school year during the fifth week of each grading period, providing students with an opportunity to improve performance prior to the end of the grading cycle. Parents are encouraged to review student progress through the Parent Portal.

High School Credits Earned in Middle School

Students may earn high school credit in selected courses while enrolled in middle school, including Algebra, Physical Science, Spanish/French, and Chorus or Band. High school credit earned in middle school is automatically accepted and will be added to the student's high school transcript unless a parent or guardian chooses to reject the credit.

Families who prefer that their student not accept high school credit earned during middle school must submit a credit rejection form at the end of the student's 8th-grade year. If the required form is submitted, the credit will not appear on the high school transcript or be

included in the high school GPA, and the student may retake the course. If no form is submitted, the credit will be accepted by default.

When accepted, high school credits earned in middle school are included in the high school GPA but not in the HOPE Scholarship GPA. Students who accept high school credit are expected to continue in the next course in the sequence during 9th grade.

When a student completes the next course in the pathway during high school, the grade earned in high school replaces the middle school grade on the transcript and becomes the final grade used for GPA calculations. The high school grade is final, and the middle school grade cannot be reinstated, even if the high school grade is lower.

Units Of Credit

The Columbia County School District awards high school credit for courses taken in middle school based on the number of semester hours completed. Each course is 18 weeks long and typically carries one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) unit of credit. Courses taught across two semesters equal one full unit of credit.

Information regarding the acceptance or rejection of high school credit earned in middle school is outlined in the High School Credits Earned in Middle School section of this handbook.

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

Promptness and Tardiness

Through the daily routine at the middle school, we encourage students to make responsible decisions about their use of time. Students are expected to attend school daily and arrive on time for all classes.

Arrival and Departure of Students

Students are not to be dropped off at school before 7:00 AM. First period begins at 7:30 a.m. Students should arrive no later than 7:20 a.m., as we expect students to be on time for all classes. Students arriving late to school must sign in at the main office. Only confirmed medical reasons will be accepted as excused tardies.

There is no outside supervision available for students before 7:00 AM or after 3:00 PM. Students should not be on campus outside of these hours unless direct supervision of a coach or club sponsor for an authorized event or practice.

Students who are purchasing a school breakfast are to go to the cafeteria upon arrival at school and eat breakfast in a timely manner and must be in their homeroom by 7:30 AM. Students not purchasing breakfast are to report directly to the gym.

Also, there is no student pick-up during dismissal preparation/dismissal beginning at 2:15 PM.

Drop off and pick up must be in the car rider line immediately in front of the school.

No vehicles are allowed in the Bus Zone. Students must leave the bus zone areas immediately after unloading from the bus in the morning. Parents are to drop-off and pick-up students in the approved supervised drop zone. No drop offs are permitted behind the school, at the ball fields, or the teacher parking lots. Students who walk home or who are picked up by parents are to leave campus immediately and are not to go to the bus loading area.

Students will remain with their last period teacher until dismissed by the office. Students may not visit other classrooms or the gym to exchange books or personal items.

Students must have a note from a parent/guardian if he/she is planning to stay for an after-school activity or if planning to change the usual way of going home. This note must be brought to the office in the morning in order to receive permission. Please make sure to list phone numbers where a parent may be reached so the note can be verified. Students may pick up their approved notes prior to the end of the school day.

Procedures for Signing In and Out of School

Students who arrive late must be signed-in or who leave early must be signed-out in the main office by the parent or guardian. In order for a late arrival/early departure to be documented as excused, a medical note must be turned in to the front office.

Parents must always provide identification when picking up their child. Only parties listed in the student information system may pick up a student. **Please make sure you complete the annual update in Parent Portal and verify your emergency contact and those authorized to pick up your child.**

School/Home Connection

Information for parents is often sent home with the students. Students have the responsibility to bring these school communications to the parents. Many items such as disciplinary referrals and permission forms require a parent signature and return to the school to make sure the parent has seen the information. Any attempt by a student to forge a parent's signature on a document, note, or other form of communication may result in In-School Suspension.

Please be sure and sign up for Parent Portal to see important information regarding student work and grades. It is vital that you complete the annual update to ensure your contact information is up to date.

Absences

A student may be excused for the following reasons:

- Personal illness or when attendance in school endangers the student's health or the health of others.
- Serious illness or death of an immediate family member (Immediate family includes parents or legal guardians, grandparents, siblings, and stepfamily.)
- A court order or mandated order of government agencies
- Special and recognized religious holidays practiced by their faith
- Conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to student health or safety
- Days missed from school to visit with his or her parent or legal guardian who is in military service in the armed forces of the United States or the National Guard prior to deployment to or during leave from an overseas assignment to a combat zone or combat support posting, up to a maximum of 5 school days per school year.

Special events which reasonably necessitate absences from school (approval by principal required prior to event) Days missed from school to attend military affairs sponsored events with his or her parent or legal guardian who is currently serving or previously served on active duty in the armed forces of the United States, in the Reserves of the armed forces of the United States on extended active duty, or in the National Guard on extended activity duty up to a maximum of five school days per school year, not to exceed two school years, for the day or days missed. Documentation must be provided prior to the absence from:

- A provider of care at or sponsored by a medical facility of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs; or
- An event sponsored by a corporation exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue Code

Any other absence not explicitly defined herein but deemed by the local school board of education to have merit based on circumstances, which may include non-school sponsored activities that meet the requirements set forth in section (2)(f)2. of this rule.

Students are expected to attend school daily. Students are also expected to arrive to school and each class on time. Failure to arrive to school or class on time will result in disciplinary action.

A parental or medical excuse will be required within five (5) school days of return to school upon absence; otherwise, the absence will not be considered excused and make-up opportunity will not be afforded. Only five excuses written by a parent for student illness will be allowed per semester; after that a valid excuse from a health care professional will be required. *It will be the student's responsibility to complete all make-up work upon return to school and to complete all assignments within a reasonable time.*

Be advised that an accumulation of absences can result in the student and/or parents being referred to juvenile authorities for truancy; refer to the Student Code of Conduct for details of this policy.

Parental Notification of Attendance

In accordance with district policy and state law, the following notifications and actions occur when students reach specific attendance thresholds:

- 3rd unexcused absence (school calendar year):
The school will notify the parent or guardian to raise awareness of the attendance concern.
- 5th excused absence in a semester (illness with parent note):
The school will notify the parent or guardian in writing of attendance-related consequences in accordance with Policy JB.
Any additional absences for medical reasons beyond this point must be supported by an original medical excuse signed by a health care professional.
- 5th unexcused absence (school calendar year):
The school will notify the parent or guardian in writing that the student is at risk of being considered truant under Policy JB.
- 5th unexcused absence for students aged 14 or older:
Written notification will be provided to the student and parent or guardian that the student is in jeopardy of violating state attendance requirements under O.C.G.A. 40-5-2, which may result in the denial of a driver's permit or license.
- 8th unexcused absence:
The school administration will schedule a meeting with the parent or guardian and a school social worker to determine whether to initiate the process of filing a truancy complaint with the Department of Juvenile Justice.
- 10th unexcused absence:
The school will submit an official truancy complaint to the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Students who have emergencies necessitating their absence from school for a portion of the school day must have been present for half of the school day to be counted present. When there is cause necessitating an individual student to be excused from school during the school day, the student shall be released from school only by his or her parent(s) or legal guardian or upon request by letter or telephone from the parent or guardian.

Attendance Policy JBD is mandated by CCSD and may be found in the Code of Conduct.

Tardiness

Time in class and time on task are essential to your success in school and to preserve instruction time for the teacher and other students. In accordance with the CCBOE Code of Conduct, our tardy policy and procedures are as follows:

Tardy To School: First period begins at 7:30 AM. If you are not in the classroom when the 7:30 bell rings, you will be counted tardy to school. You will need to sign in at the front office and you will receive a pass to class. The only excused tardies are those excused with a Doctor's note. If your child arrives on a late bus, it is not counted against the number of tardies.

1st, 2nd, and 3rd Tardy to School = Documentation in Attendance Record

4th Tardy to School = Student is called to office and verbally warned.

5th Tardy to School = Parent receives a phone notification.

6th Tardy to School = Student is assigned to detention.

7th Tardy to School = Student is assigned to 2 days of detention.

8th Tardy to School = Student is assigned to Saturday School

9th Tardy to School = Saturday school + admin/parent conference.

10th Tardy and beyond = Saturday school + referral to outside agency.

Tardy To Class: Each class begins on time according to your class schedule. Time is allotted between classes for class change. Students are given specific times for restroom breaks. Students who are not inside the classroom when the class tardy bell rings will be counted as tardy to class. Tardies to each class will be documented by the classroom teacher. Upon the 4th

tardy to a class, the student will receive a warning. Each additional tardy will be referred to the office and will result in the following consequence:

4th Tardy to Class = Verbal Warning to student

5th Tardy to Class = Phone call home

6th Tardy to Class = 1 day of Detention

7th Tardy to Class = 2 days of Detention

8th Tardy to Class and each additional tardy to Class = Saturday School.

A student who is more than five minutes late to class may be considered as skipping. Class and school tardies reset at the semester break. First semester is August through the end of December. Second semester is January through the end of the school year.

GENERAL SCHOOL PROCEDURES AND INFORMATION

Book Bags

Book bags can be used to carry books and materials to and from school. Students may bring book bags to class and place the bag in the designated area by the teacher. Girls' hand bags should be small enough to fit under desks. Only small, drawstring bags will be permitted for items for PE. Students will not be allowed to go to the book bag during class without teacher permission. The book bag will also be used to house students' electronic devices.

Searches of Students and Belongings

Any student may be searched whenever there is reasonable suspicion and/or circumstances that the student has violated either the law or the rules of the school. Such a search may include bookbags, student purses, possessions, and clothing.

Student Messages and Gifts

Only messages of an emergency nature will be delivered to students in order to keep classroom interruptions to a minimum. Gifts and flowers will not be accepted for students.

Use of Telephone by Student

The office telephone may be used by students for emergencies such as illness only. It is the responsibility of the teacher to determine if a student's request to be dismissed from class to use the phone is justified. Students needing access to the phone will be sent to the office. The student must have a hall pass and must sign the register so that phone calls can be monitored.

Cafeteria Rules and Courtesy Guidelines

Columbia County's commitment to offering students a superior education which extends to the meals that we provide for students. The school aspires to provide the highest possible quality in its breakfast and lunch programs, and is dedicated to meeting high standards of nutrition, taste, attractiveness, and accurate delivery.

All parents/guardians are encouraged to complete a Free and Reduced Priced Meals Application for their student so that payment status can be established.

Students may purchase a meal daily, \$1.75 for breakfast or \$0 reduced and \$3.50 for lunch or \$.0 (reduced). Breakfast is served from 7:00 a.m. to 7:20 a.m. If the student wishes to purchase a double lunch - the first lunch is at the student cost, the second portion is charged extra depending on the item.

Students needing to charge a lunch must see the cafeteria manager.

Parents may make breakfast/lunch payments by cash or check directly at the cafeteria. Online payment options will also be available for parents wishing to pay by credit card through EZ School Pay. Parents are encouraged not to send cash with their student to avoid the risk of loss or theft.

- Students are not allowed to take any food or drinks out of the cafeteria.
- Eating and/or drinking is not allowed in the library, hallways, or gym.
- Eating is not allowed in the classroom unless a student has permission from a teacher or administrator.
- Only clear, plastic water bottles are allowed in the classrooms.
- Food brought from home must be in a lunch box or paper bag. Soft drinks from home are discouraged.
- Glass bottles and Energy Drinks are not allowed at school.

Students are responsible for cleaning up their lunch area each day. Tables must be cleared and trash must be discarded in containers provided before the students will be dismissed from the lunchroom.

Students must sit where assigned and may not leave the lunchroom table without permission from the teacher who accompanies them to lunch. Throwing items in the lunchroom will result in a disciplinary referral and consequence.

Cell Phones/Electronic Devices

Electronic devices should not be out, on or in use at any time during the school day to include while on school bus transportation. Examples include, but are not limited to, cellphones, tablets, headphones, ear buds, smart glasses, smart watches, and/or other similar electronic devices. Electronic devices must be kept in a bookbag or locker, and not anywhere on a student's person. Electronic device ringers, alerts, and alarms should be turned off.

Disposition: Detention and/or Saturday School. This offense carries a possible recommendation for long-term suspension.

Hall Passes

Students are not permitted in the halls during class periods unless accompanied by a teacher or in possession of their agenda which contains their hall pass signed by a teacher or staff member. Students must have a pass to see a teacher, counselor, principal, go to the media center, or to use the telephone. Students in the hallway without a pass or in a location not stated on the pass will be considered skipping class and will receive appropriate consequences.

Hallway Behavior

In order to keep the noise at a minimum and to ensure student safety, students should be quiet and courteous in the hallways at all times. Class changes are to be as quick and quiet as possible. Always walk on the right side of the hall. Restrooms are not to be used during class changes unless the teacher gives permission. Students running, playing around, using profanity, or yelling in the hallways will be considered to be engaging in Disorderly Conduct. Consequences consistent with the Code of Conduct will be applied.

Students may not buy, sell, barter, or trade items from/to each other at school.

Homework

Home study is a necessary part of school. Students will be expected to spend time doing homework in addition to attending their scheduled classes to achieve satisfactory progress. Some assignments are long-range in nature and require planned study time for completion. Students are strongly encouraged to develop good study habits. Study buddies in each class are helpful in order to discuss or retrieve missed work when absent. Homework policies are developed in each class or grade level team to promote the success and learning of all students and deter failing grades. Parents are reminded that daily reading is a part of homework.

School/Home Communication

Information for parents is often sent home with the students. Students have the responsibility to bring these school communications to the parents. Many items such as disciplinary referrals and permission forms require a parent signature and return to the school to make sure the parent has seen the information. Any attempt by a student to forge a parent's signature on a document, note, or other form of communication may result in In-School Suspension.

Please be sure and sign up for Parent Portal to see important information regarding student work and grades. It is vital that you complete the annual update to ensure your contact information is up to date.

Items Unnecessary for School

Items which are unnecessary for instruction should be left at home. Electronic items such as laser pointers, radios, electronic games, electronic pets, etc. are not allowed at school. Other play items such as yo-yo's, etc. are not allowed in school. Personal grooming items must remain put-away and are not to be used in class. Any items that disrupt school will be confiscated by the teacher and checked in at the office. Only parents may pick up confiscated items. Repeated occurrences will result in disciplinary action. A student's refusal to hand items to the teacher or other school personnel will result in placement into ISS. Only items needed for school activities should be brought to school. Students who discover that they have brought personal property items mentioned above to school by mistake may voluntarily turn the item in to school personnel without consequences if they do so at the first chance they have. The school recommends that expensive items or large sums of money should not be brought to school. **The school personnel will not be responsible for these items and will not interrupt instructional activities if they are lost or stolen.**

Information on District/School Website

“The universal nature of the Internet makes it necessary to use care when identifying students on individual school and system web sites. Unless a parent objects in writing to the principal of the school where the child is enrolled, the Columbia County School System and individual schools may periodically acknowledge student work, activities, and/or achievements on their web sites. Such information about your child will be limited to photographs, student’s first name, school, grade level, and/or student work.”

Learning Commons

The Learning Commons is an information center. The main seating area is used for group work, independent study, and research. The Learning Commons functions to enrich the curriculum by offering a variety of materials for students and teachers. The School Store is also located in the Learning Commons. The Learning Commons operation guidelines, rules, and regulations include:

1. The Learning Commons is open one-half hour before and after school, and throughout the school day for book checkout, return, and other services.
2. Books are checked out for two weeks and may be renewed on the due date.
3. Reserved books, reference books, and magazines may be checked out over night.
4. A student ID or number is required for book checkout.
5. A fine of five cents (\$.05) is charged per day for overdue books.
6. When books are lost, the full price of the book must be paid. If a book is damaged, an appropriate fee will be charged.

Lost and Found

Any found articles at school are to be taken to the plastic bin which is located at the beginning of each hallway. It is strongly urged that parents distinctly label all personal possessions that a student may be bringing to school. *All unclaimed articles will be donated to a charity at the end of each nine weeks.*

Students who have lost or had property stolen must immediately report the loss to a teacher or administrator. The student should make a written report on the details of the loss and turn the report in to the main office.

Students should not bring valuable items such as cameras, leather coats, radios, expensive jewelry, or large sums of money to school. Failure to comply will result in disciplinary action.

Medication and Medical Information

All prescription drugs must be in the original container from the pharmacy. The student's name must be clearly marked with proper documentation on file in the office.

All over-the-counter medication (Tylenol, cough syrup, cough drops, cold medications, etc....) must be in the original container - no plastic bags, Tupperware, or discarded containers from previous medications. The student's name must be clearly marked.

All medications, prescription or over-the-counter, medicines must be kept in the nurse's clinic located in the front office. If the student needs to take the medication home at the end of the day, he/she may pick it up at the end of the day during dismissal.

The office should be immediately notified in writing by the parent/guardian of any special medical conditions. Appropriate medication must be placed in the office unless other arrangements need to be made. Special arrangements for medication must be approved by the administration. A note from the parent stating specifically when the student is to take the medication is required. A note stating "as needed" does not contain specific direction.

Students are not allowed to carry or store any medication, including over-the-counter medication at school. Students who possess, carry, pass or take medication without following medication policies are subject to disciplinary action according to the drug policy in the Columbia County School Code of Conduct.

Students are required to be fever free (less than 100.0 oral) for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone before returning to school. Fever should be gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

Hospital Homebound

Hospital/Homebound educational services are provided to students who will be absent for an extended period (10 days or more) due to a medical condition, and the district considers the student eligible for services. Approval is based on a completed medical referral form to the CCSD signed by the treating licensed physician. This form must include a statement from the physician indicating that the student will be absent for at least ten school days and that the student is physically able to participate in educational instruction. Intermittent Hospital/Homebound services may be offered to students with chronic health conditions when

absences due to illness are expected to last at least 3 consecutive school days per occurrence. An Educational Service Plan (ESP) will be created by the local school before the student begins receiving Hospital/Homebound services. These instructional services may take place in a home or hospital setting. The student should be counted as present if instructional services are provided for at least three hours per week.

Parent Portal

Parent Portal is a web-based program for parents and students to receive student grades and other information stored within the Columbia County Schools' student information system on their home computer. You only need one Parent Portal account. If you have more than one student, your other student(s) will appear in your account. After creating your account and logging in to the portal, click on Today in the left menu, then use the drop-down menu in the upper right corner to select your other student(s). For more information or assistance contact the CMS guidance office.

Student Communication

Numerous communications are made to students on a daily basis through announcements, teacher websites, Google Classroom, Remind, bulletin boards, newsletters, and the distribution of literature.

Visitors

All visitors must check in at the office prior to visiting a classroom. Parents or guardians are welcomed to visit or observe in classrooms, provided it does not interfere with instruction or student safety. Arrangements must be made through the front office and a visitor pass is required.

Dress Code

Please refer to the Columbia County Middle School Code of Conduct. Student who violates the dress code will be required to change to appropriate attire before they will be allowed in class. Students who are unable to obtain appropriate attire will be placed in ISS for the remainder of the school day. A second dress code violation will result in detention. Third and subsequent violations may result in ISS. Defiance of the dress code will be treated as willful refusal with appropriate suspensions.

School Behavior and Discipline

Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS)

Columbia County Middle Schools use Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to promote a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment for all students. PBIS is a proactive approach that focuses on teaching and reinforcing positive behaviors, rather than relying solely on punishment for misbehavior.

While each middle school implements PBIS in ways that meet the needs of its unique school community, all programs share common goals: setting clear expectations for student behavior, recognizing positive choices, and providing consistent support to help students grow socially and emotionally. PBIS also encourages strong partnerships between students, staff, and families to support student success both academically and behaviorally.

Parents may notice PBIS reflected through school-wide expectations, positive behavior recognition opportunities, and clear, consistent responses to behavior. Together, these practices help create positive school climates where students feel supported, respected, and ready to learn.

Code of Student Conduct

A copy of the Columbia County Board of Education Code of Conduct for Middle School Students is reviewed with students at the beginning of the year. The document is available on the CCBOE website, and parents are asked to review the Code with students. It spells out student rights and responsibilities while under the jurisdiction of the school. It also gives procedures to be followed in disciplinary cases.

Please complete your annual update in Parent Portal and acknowledge that you have reviewed the Code of Conduct as described.

Students are expected to behave as reasonable and responsible individuals. Courtesy toward others is essential, as is safety. Various corrective actions can be taken when a student misbehaves. The severity of action will depend on how serious the misbehavior was and on the student's past behavior. The teacher will handle classroom discipline in most cases. Actions they may take include but are not limited to reprimands, separation from other classmates, parent contacts, detention, Saturday and finally, referral to a school administrator.

Students who are suspended from school are not allowed to be on school property or at any school related activity for the duration of the suspensions.

Disciplinary Consequences

The following consequences will be applied by the administration according to the severity of the misconduct, the number of previous offenses and the Code of Conduct for Columbia County Schools.

Detention / Saturday School

1. Students must bring school materials to work on during detention.
2. No sleeping, lounging, or laying head on desk.
3. No talking or other interaction between students is allowed.
4. No cell phone or other electronic devices may be used.
5. Students must be on time.
6. Failure to follow detention/Saturday School rules will result in no credit and/or disciplinary action.
7. Students who miss detention/Saturday school without making prior arrangements to reschedule will be assigned to ISS.

In-School Suspension

In-School Suspension is an alternative to suspension. The administration may assign the student to ISS. This removes the student from the regular classroom. The student will work on assignments similar to his/her regular classroom. One full day of ISS, provided the student completes all assignments, would be equivalent to one day of suspension. Students are to bring all textbooks to ISS on each assigned day. Students assigned to ISS must report directly to the main office immediately upon arrival to the school campus. They are not allowed to go anywhere on campus. Violation of this procedure may result in additional days of ISS or suspension from school. Student will not be allowed to participate in extracurricular activities on the day of ISS.

ISS Classroom Rules and Expectations

1. All Columbia County and CMS school rules apply.
2. Students placed in ISS are not permitted to participate in any extra-curricular activities for the duration of time the student is in ISS. This includes participating in or watching any practices, competitions, or any other after-school event on any Columbia County School System campus.
3. Students will raise their hand when they have finished an assignment. The teacher will collect that assignment and give the student another assignment. Students are not to turn around in their seats or speak out unless spoken to by the teacher.
4. Assignments made by the classroom teachers or by the ISS teacher are the only assignments to be worked on in ISS.
5. Student will work at all times while in ISS.
6. All desks will be clean and all materials will be picked up off the floor at the end of the school day.
7. There will be one (1) restroom break in the morning and one (1) restroom break after lunch. There will be no talking or other forms of communication going to or from the restroom or lunch.
8. Any partial or full-day absences from ISS must be made-up.
9. Rule infractions will result in additional days of ISS and/or Out of School suspension.
10. Students who are suspended Out-Of-School for misbehavior in ISS must complete assigned ISS days when they return to school before they are allowed to return to regular classes.
11. If additional days of ISS are assigned by the ISS teacher, the additional days will not be counted toward the cumulative number of days per year.

Out of School Suspension

The student is removed from all aspects of the school program for one to ten days per offense. The days spent out of school will count against the student's attendance record. Students who have been suspended out of school may not participate in any extracurricular activities. This includes tryouts, practices, or competitions. Suspended students are not to be on any Columbia

County school property during their suspension. Suspended students will be afforded the opportunity to complete major assignments or tests if the suspension was the original consequence. Parents who choose out-of-school suspension in place of another consequence or who are assigned out-of-school suspension for failure to complete another consequence are not allowed to make-up assignments or tests which come due during their suspension.

Bus Behavior and Expectations

The proper behavior among students while being transported on a bus is fundamental to safety. The lack of appropriate behavior on the bus has an effect on every student's safety. The most dangerous aspect of unruly behavior is the distraction it causes to the bus driver, whose main focus is concentrating on traffic conditions, not on discipline. Any behavior that causes the driver to shift their attention from traffic to discipline will not be tolerated. Safe student transportation for all students is our goal.

CMS School Bus Discipline Policy

- 1. Because misconduct by even one student creates an unsafe condition for all students, the rules will be strictly enforced.**
- 2. Riding on the bus is a privilege that may be suspended or revoked when a student does not behave in an appropriate manner.**

Tornado/Fire/Safety Drills

Tornado, fire, and other safety drills will be conducted in an orderly manner. Such drills will be held periodically during the school year. An evacuation chart is posted in each room. Proper behavior during drills is vital for student safety. Misbehavior or failure to follow directions during a drill will result in disciplinary action. Students who maliciously pull the fire alarm will be suspended.

Loitering On Campus

No student or other persons are allowed to loiter on school grounds. Students who are absent for the day or suspended are not to be on the campus without permission from the school office. Students on campus without permission may be charged with trespassing.

School Counseling Services

School counselors are available to support students in developing their academic, social, career, and personal strengths, helping them grow into responsible and productive citizens. Counseling services are provided in a variety of ways to meet student needs, including:

- **Classroom Guidance:** School counselors provide instruction to large groups of students, focusing on common needs, interests, concerns, and skill development for all students.
- **Small Group Counseling:** Small group sessions involve two or more students working with a school counselor to address a shared area of concern, build positive relationships, develop problem-solving skills, and work toward personal or academic goals. Parental permission is required for participation.
- **Individual Counseling:** Individual counseling consists of private, one-on-one interaction between a student and a school counselor to address personal, social, or academic concerns. Parents or guardians will be notified if a concern involves the student's or others' safety.

Students may request counseling services by completing a Student Referral Form or by informing a teacher or staff member of their desire to speak with a school counselor.

Parents or guardians have the right to opt their child out of counseling services by completing and signing a waiver form.

School counselors follow the professional ethical standards of confidentiality when working with students on personal matters. Confidentiality will be broken when required by law or when:

- There is reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect.
- There is a belief that a student may harm themselves.
- There is reason to believe a student intends to harm another individual, and the situation cannot be resolved through intervention.

Students must obtain permission from their teacher to visit the school counselor, and meetings will be scheduled based on the counselor's availability.

Military Family Life Counselor

- Masters or Doctorate-level licensed counselors specializing in child and youth behavioral issues.
- Available at no cost to assist children and youth, parents, family members and staff of child and youth programs.
- Available to provide short-term, non-medical counseling support.

Student Wellness and Prevention Programs

As part of our commitment to student well-being, safety, and healthy decision-making, middle school students may participate in age-appropriate prevention and awareness programs during advisement sessions throughout the school year.

- The **Monique Burr Foundation for Children (MBF) Child Safety Program** supports students in developing skills related to personal safety, digital responsibility, and healthy boundaries. Lessons encourage students to recognize unsafe situations, make informed choices, and identify trusted adults for support.
- The **Signs of Suicide (SOS) Program** promotes mental health awareness and emphasizes the importance of asking for help for oneself or others. The program focuses on recognizing warning signs of emotional distress and reinforces that seeking help is a positive and responsible action.
- In addition, schools participate in **Red Ribbon Week**, a nationwide prevention effort that promotes healthy, drug-free choices. Activities during Red Ribbon Week are designed to encourage positive decision-making, build awareness, and support a safe and respectful school environment.

Detailed information about each program, including participation options, is shared with parents and students prior to any advisement sessions.

Extracurricular Activities

We encourage students to participate in after-school activities. Please remember, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to pick students up at the designated time. Students unable to obtain transportation to or from an activity at the appropriate time must not attend. Failure to obtain transportation may result in loss of privilege to attend after-school activities. Students who are serving any form of suspension are not eligible to participate or attend extracurricular activities for the duration of the suspension.

Eligibility To Participate

A student must pass 5 of 6 subjects during the preceding semester in order to be eligible to participate in any interscholastic competitive activity. Activities under this policy include but are not limited to all sports, cheerleading, literary meets and academic bowls. Students participating in sports must have a yearly physical examination and provide the school with proof of insurance. All documentation must be on file in the school office prior to practice or any type of participation. Coaches or activity sponsors will provide you with any needed forms and with information regarding all rules and regulations.

After School Dances

All school and county rules apply during all afterschool activities, including dances.

Only Columbia Middle School students may attend. Once inside, students may not leave early unless escorted by a guardian. It is recommended that if you plan to pick up your child other than at the conclusion of the dance, you arrange a predetermined time for them to meet you in the lobby. It can take several minutes to locate your child in the dance environment.

Students are not permitted to run or engage in horseplay as this is a safety concern.

Concessions are available for purchase, but food and drink items may not be taken onto the dance floor.

Rides home must be arranged before you come to the dance. All students must be picked up promptly at the end of the dance. Students who are not picked up in a timely manner will be turned over to the police to supervise until a parent or guardian picks them up. Repeated violations of not picking a student up on time may result in the student not being allowed to attend dances.

Junior Achievement Discovery Center

Middle school students in the Columbia County School District participate in Junior Achievement (JA) programs designed to build foundational skills in financial literacy, career awareness, and responsible decision-making. As part of the curriculum, students will participate in a one-day immersive experience at the Junior Achievement Discovery Center of the CSRA during their middle school years.

- In 6th grade, students participate in JA BizTown, where they take on roles within a simulated town, manage personal finances, and learn how businesses, government, and citizens work together in a real-world economy.
- In 7th grade, students attend JA Finance Park, an interactive experience that helps students explore budgeting, saving, spending, and planning for future life goals while making financial decisions based on career choices and income scenarios.

These experiences provide students with hands-on opportunities to apply classroom learning in authentic settings while strengthening financial literacy, career readiness, and problem-solving skills at an appropriate age level.

Parent volunteers play a vital role in making these experiences successful. Families are encouraged to volunteer at the JA Discovery Center when their child participates in JA BizTown in 6th grade and JA Finance Park in 7th grade. Information about volunteering opportunities can

be found on the Junior Achievement of the CSRA website:

<https://www.ja.org/web/ja-csra>

Columbia Virtual Academy (CVA)

The Columbia Virtual Academy is a free virtual learning school for all students in grades 6 - 12 who reside in Columbia County. The mission of CVA is to provide rigorous, standards-based, personalized instruction in a flexible, virtual environment that meets the needs of CVA learners, anywhere and at any time. CVA has enrollment periods in the Fall and Spring semesters. Enrollment at CVA must be approved by the counselor. Students may be part-time or full-time students at CVA. Students may participate in extracurricular activities and athletics at their zoned school while enrolled full-time in CVA courses. All county and Georgia High School Association rules apply. Students in CVA will remain students at their zoned school; however, they have the flexibility to take virtual classes through CVA. Any student interested in taking virtual classes at CVA should contact their school counselor.

Summer School Remediation

Summer school instruction is offered to remediate previously failed courses. Courses offered in summer school are based on demand and may be canceled if enrollment minimums are not met. Upper-level courses are generally not offered during the summer session. A list of suggested courses for the coming summer may be obtained from the school counselor in April. Pre-registration is held for Columbia County students in April and May. Students may earn up to 1.5 credits or units per summer through traditional and online coursework. Summer school is typically four weeks in length, and fees are charged.

Online Learning

As required by Georgia Law (SB289), options are offered during the fall, spring, and summer semesters through non-traditional online providers. The Columbia County School District offers students the following full-time online learning opportunities for students in grades 3-12:

- Columbia Virtual Academy (Grades 6-12 only), Georgia Virtual School
- Georgia Connections Academy*
- Georgia Cyber Academy*

*Apart from the Columbia Virtual Academy and the Georgia Virtual School, parents should note that students enrolling in one of these schools must be withdrawn from the Columbia County School District (CCSD) and enrolled in the online school. Students enrolled in online school are no longer students of the CCSD.

Part-time online learning opportunities for students in grades 3-12 include:

- Students in grades 6-12 may take core and elective courses through the Columbia Virtual Academy and/or the Georgia Virtual School.
- Students desiring to take advantage of part-time online learning opportunities as part of the regular seven-period day will be scheduled accordingly, and such courses will be free of cost.
- Courses taken in addition to the seven-period day must be paid for by students or their parents. If you wish to take advantage of the online learning opportunities available to students or if you have questions, please contact your child's school counselor.
- Credits earned through non-traditional providers, e.g., GAVS, GAVS Credit Recovery, and CCSD Online, are solely for meeting graduation requirements for the Columbia County School District.
- Credits earned as a result of coursework completed outside of the traditional classroom setting may not be accepted by postsecondary institutions and regulatory agencies.
- Students must complete the "Non-traditional Coursework Application" and receive approval prior to registration and enrollment in any online programs.
- An application and a list of approved programs and courses may be obtained from the school counselor.

Advisement Program and Career Exploration

Middle school students participate in an advisement program designed to help them explore interests, build self-awareness, and begin planning for future learning opportunities. School counselors and teachers support students as they learn about academic pathways, career options, and the connections between middle school experiences and high school programs of study.

As part of the advisement program, all middle school students are provided opportunities to explore high school pathway options, understand how coursework connects to potential careers, and begin thinking about future goals. In alignment with Georgia's Top State for Talent Act, students engage in age-appropriate career exploration activities, including interest and aptitude surveys, pathway awareness lessons, and discussions of the skills needed for success in high school and beyond.

Through advisement, students are encouraged to reflect on their strengths and interests, ask questions, and explore a variety of academic and career possibilities. These experiences are designed to help students make informed choices as they transition to high school while building confidence in planning for their future.

Course Changes

Student course selections are developed through a data-driven process that considers academic performance, teacher recommendations, assessment data, and course availability to best meet student needs and ensure balanced class enrollments. In addition to core academic courses, students participate in Connections classes, which are scheduled as a rotation and change every nine weeks, with each Connections course predetermined as part of the master schedule. Because course placement and rotations are carefully planned to support student learning and staffing needs, schedule changes based on parent or student preference are not supported. Families are encouraged to review course selections carefully during the registration period, as changes after schedules are finalized are extremely limited.

Artificial Intelligence Guidelines

To align with the CCSD Academic Curriculum for Excellence (ACE), Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a tool for efficiency and critical thinking, not a replacement for human intellect.

Students are required to cite AI tools used in the assignment and are responsible for verifying the accuracy of the AI. All interactions with AI tools on district networks/devices are subject to monitoring. Submitting AI-generated text as your own original work without citation is plagiarism and is subject to disciplinary action as outlined in the CCSD Student Handbook. Students should maintain evidence of their drafting process (e.g., version history, AI chat logs, handwritten notes).

We will use a "**Traffic Light**" system for assignments. It is the student's responsibility to check with the teacher to know which "Light" is active.

CCSD Student AI Guide: The "Traffic Light" Protocol

RED LIGHT: STOP (Prohibited Use)

"The Danger Zone": *Using AI in these ways violates Academic Integrity and may result in disciplinary action.*

- Submitting AI-generated text or code as your own work
- Failing to cite AI tools within your work
- Using AI without explicit authorization.
- Generating images or text that mock, harass, or impersonate others
- Generating content for profit using school/district resources

YELLOW LIGHT: CAUTION (Ask Permission)

"The Co-Pilot Zone." *You may use AI for these tasks, BUT you must check with your teacher about what is allowed on the assignment.*

1. Asking AI to critique your work (You must do the thinking and writing; AI does the reviewing)
2. Summarizing text with AI tools to improve student understanding
3. Organizing your thoughts before you write the draft
4. Creating visual aids for educational purposes
5. Brainstorming ideas around a central idea or topic
6. Getting explanations on concepts or theories
7. Correcting spelling and punctuation (e.g., Grammarly, Spellcheck)
8. Investigating reference materials with AI support (you must verify each source independently, reading the original articles yourself, and selecting only materials that meet the assignment's academic standards)

GREEN LIGHT: GO (Approved Support)

"The ACE Support Zone." *You may use AI freely for these tasks to support your learning, provided you cite the tool.*

- Creating time management plans (study schedules, project timelines)
- Generating study materials
- Organizing notes and outlines

Given the rapid evolution of Artificial Intelligence, this guide serves as a foundational overview of major areas and not an exhaustive list of all potential uses. Students who are uncertain about the appropriate use of an AI tool should seek clarification from their teacher before using AI.

Looking Ahead to High School

Middle school is an important time for students to explore interests, build strong academic habits, and begin preparing for the expectations of high school. While students will receive detailed guidance and advisement during their 8th-grade year, the following overview is provided to help families understand how middle school connects to the high school experience.

In high school, students earn **credits toward graduation** by successfully completing semester long courses. A total of **24 credits** is required to earn a high school diploma, including coursework in English Language Arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and elective areas such as career pathways, fine arts, and world language. Some courses taken during middle

school may earn **high school credit** and may become part of a student's high school academic record if accepted by the family.

High school operates on a **semester system**, and grades are posted at the end of each semester. Because grades factor into credit, GPA, and future opportunities, students are expected to take increased ownership of their learning and academic responsibilities beginning in ninth grade.

As students progress through high school, they may have opportunities to participate in advanced coursework, including Advanced Placement (AP), Dual Enrollment, and career pathway programs, as well as extracurricular activities and athletics. Academic performance, attendance, and behavior all play a role in eligibility for many of these opportunities.

Additional details about graduation requirements, course options, and post-secondary pathways are outlined in the **High School Student Handbook**. Families are encouraged to work closely with school counselors throughout middle school to ensure students are prepared for a successful transition to high school.

Academic Pathways

English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies Pathway Requirements:

- Students need to earn four units of credit in the pathway subject (Social Studies 3.5); and
- The student's chosen pathway will include at least one Advanced Placement course, or one International Baccalaureate course, or one postsecondary enrollment course that fulfills a core graduation requirement in a selected subject; and
- Students need to complete two units of sequential course credit in one world language.

High School Graduation Requirements and Academic Pathways (IHF-6)

	9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade	Units
English Language Arts Pathway	Literature Comp I	Literature Comp II	American Lit AP Language AP Seminar	British Literature Multi-Cultural Lit Advanced Composition Dramatic Writing AP Literature AP Research ENG1101/1102	4 English
Math Pathway	Geometry	Adv Algebra	AP pre-calculus	AP Calculus AP Statistics Dual Enrollment	4 Math
		Enhanced Adv Algebra AP Precalculus	AP Calculus AP Statistics	Differential Equations Dual Enrollment	

Alternate	Algebra Concepts Connections	Geometry Concepts Connections	Advanced Algebra Enhanced Adv Algebra and AP Precalculus	Advanced Mathematical Decision Making Statistical Reasoning AP Calculus AP Statistics Dual Enrollment	
Science Pathway	Biology AP Biology	Chemistry AP Biology	Physics AP Physics I/M AP Chem	AP Biology AP Chemistry AP Physics Anatomy/Physiology Astronomy Forensics Epidemiology Meteorology	4 Science
Alternate	Physical Science	Biology	Chemistry Enviro Science AP Enviro Sci	Astronomy Forensics Anatomy and Physiology Epidemiology Meteorology CTAE Science	
Social Studies Pathway	Govt(0.5) Geog(0.5) AP Govt (1)	World History AP World Hist	US History AP US History	Economics/Personal AP Business w/ EF AP Macroeconomics (0.5) AP Microeconomics (0.5) Dual Enrollment	3-5 Social Studies
Health Physical Education	Health (0.5) Personal Fitness (0.5)	Optional	Optional	Optional	1 PE/Health
Pathways	First Course CTAE Fine Arts Modern Language*	Second Course CTAE Fine Arts Modern Language*	Third Course CTAE Fine Arts Modern Language*	Additional CTAE, Fine Arts or World Language	3 CTAE, Fine Arts or World Lang
Electives	Choose electives based on your interests.				4-5 Electives
*Students planning to enter a University System of Georgia Institution or other post-secondary institution must take two units of the same modern language.				TOTAL CREDITS REQUIRED	24

Fine Arts Pathways

Our high schools offer many options for fine arts, including music, theater, and visual arts. Students need to earn 3 units of credit in any of the 4 areas.

- Music

- Theatre
- Visual art

Fine Arts Diploma Seals are awarded to graduating high school students who complete a fine arts pathway and a fourth additional fine arts course in the same fine arts subject area or a different fine arts. Additionally, students must share their talent by participating in two fine arts-related extracurricular activities, as well as providing at least 20 hours of arts-related community service and presenting a capstone presentation of their experiences

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Career, Technology, Agriculture Education (CTAE) Pathways

To complete a CTAE pathway, students need to earn 3 units of credit in the pathway. Our high schools offer a variety of CTAE pathways. Below is a list of all pathways offered in the Columbia

Additional High School Opportunities: A Preview

As students prepare for the transition to high school, they may have opportunities to participate in a variety of academic and career-focused programs. While detailed eligibility requirements and enrollment procedures are shared during high school advisement, the following overviews are provided to build early awareness.

Advanced Placement (AP) Courses

Advanced Placement (AP) courses offer students the opportunity to engage in college-level coursework while still in high school. These rigorous courses are designed to help students develop advanced academic skills, and many students choose AP courses as part of their academic pathway based on readiness, interests, and postsecondary goals.

International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme

The International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme is a globally recognized, academically challenging program offered at select high schools within the district. IB emphasizes critical thinking, research, writing, and global perspectives. Students typically begin IB coursework in the later years of high school after completing preparation courses.

Dual Enrollment

Dual Enrollment allows eligible high school students to earn college and high school credit simultaneously by taking approved college-level courses. This option is designed for students who demonstrate academic readiness and want to begin earning postsecondary credits while completing high school graduation requirements.

Work-Based Learning (WBL)

Work-Based Learning is a high school program that connects classroom instruction with real-world workplace experiences. Through this program, students may earn course credit while gaining hands-on experience in a career field related to their interests and pathway.

Participation typically occurs during a student's junior or senior year.

Middle school coursework, study habits, attendance, and behavior all help prepare students for these future opportunities. School counselors provide ongoing guidance to help students and families make informed decisions as students progress toward high school.