



Farmingdale School District

Weldon E. Howitt Middle School

MICHAEL GAVALAS *Principal*
GIULIA MARANO *Assistant Principal*
CHERYL DePIERRO *Assistant Principal*
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(516) 434-5410

PAUL DEFENDINI
Superintendent of Schools

August 2025

Dear Howitt Families,

Welcome to the 2025-2026 school year at Howitt Middle School! Whether you are returning, joining us from an elementary school in the district, or have relocated from another community, our teachers, support staff, and administrators are ready to welcome you and share all that Howitt and the school community have to offer.

While the start of a school year brings newness and exciting change, you will find that our commitment to student success and excellence in all that we do remains the same. We will continue to focus on increasing student competencies in reading, writing, and math, as they are the foundation of all learning. Beyond the classroom, we are proud to offer a wide variety of extracurricular programs, clubs, and activities. These opportunities allow students to explore their interests, develop leadership skills, and build lasting connections with their peers. Please encourage your students to be part of the Howitt school community by joining a club, attending extra help, and taking part in our athletic and performing arts programs.

Equally important to student growth and achievement is the environment in which learning takes place. Everyone recognizes that a safe, structured, and nurturing environment allows students and staff members to thrive and reach their fullest potential. To that end, there will continue to be a school-wide focus on:

- Kindness, responsibility, citizenship, and hard work.
- The importance of attendance and promptness.
- Effective communication and conflict resolution.
- The use of ID cards and conducting effective safety drills.

You may already know that NYS has instituted a “bell-to-bell” ban on personal electronic devices, most importantly, cellphones. At Howitt, any student who brings devices such as cellphones, smartwatches, ear buds, or tablets to school will be expected to power them off and store them in a backpack or locker from 7:55 AM until 2:42 PM. Students who need to call home can go to any grade level office or to the main office. Parents wishing to contact their child(ren) can call the main office (516-434-5410) or any grade level office. Students in violation of the policy will be addressed, and discipline will be applied in a progressive manner. A more specific letter regarding our “Away for the Day” policy will be shared in a few days.

At Howitt, each grade is led by an assistant principal and structured to provide students with consistent support systems while fostering communication and strengthening relationships among students, staff,

and families. Each grade-level team (see below) will remain the same for students throughout their time at Howitt Middle School.

Grade Level Team	6th Grade (516) 434-5409	7th Grade (516) 434-5415	8th Grade (516) 434-5414
Assistant Principal	Mr. McCloud	Ms. DePierro	Ms. Marano
Dean	Ms. Campbell	Mr. Hoffman	Ms. Longo
Guidance Counselor	Ms. Lehrfeld	Ms. Michalowski	Mr. Lizana
Guidance Counselor for Self-Contained and ELL	Ms. Calderon	Ms. Calderon	Ms. Calderon
Social Worker	Mr. Delisi	Ms. Muuss	Ms. Cappellino
Psychologist	Ms. Robertson	Ms. Moscato	Ms. Carrillo
Nurse Health Office (516) 434-5430	Ms. McClaughlin	Ms. Fox	Ms. Cruciata

Below are some procedural reminders and information regarding the Howitt school day:

- The first day of school will be Thursday, September 4, 2025, and it will be an “A” day.
- Students who wish to eat breakfast can enter school at 7:25 AM. Activities such as Morning Rec, clubs, etc., will begin in a few weeks.
- Students may go to their lockers at 7:55 AM, but must be in their period one class by 8:05 AM. Students who arrive at class after 8:05 AM are considered late.
- Dismissal is at 2:42 PM. Students who are not involved in after-school activities are expected to leave the grounds after dismissal.
- Buses depart from Howitt at approximately 2:47 PM.
 - Students who miss their bus can go to any office to call a parent to pick them up.
 - Bus passes must be presented to the driver for both the morning and afternoon bus rides.
 - If you have not received a bus pass by the start of school, the bus will still pick up your child at the designated stop.
- Students are expected to wear their ID cards at all times. Additional ID scanners will be installed this year.
- Hats and hoods are NOT permitted to be worn in school.

With safety as the top priority, here are some guidelines regarding morning arrivals, dismissal, and visitors:

- Students who arrive at school by car should be dropped off and picked up at the designated pick-up and drop-off area. [Please click here to view a map of the designated area.](#)
- Students who arrive at school before 7:30 AM can enter through the main entrance at Howitt East.
- Students who arrive at school late (after 8:05 AM) must scan/sign in at the main entrance of Howitt East.
- Students with ambulatory devices (cast, crutches, etc.) can be dropped off and picked up at the main entrance of Howitt East.
- Walkers can enter and exit the building at the main entrances of Howitt East and Howitt West. Students must use the [designated walking paths](#) to ensure safe entry onto school grounds. Walking onto school grounds from the security booth at Van Cott will not be permitted until 4:00 PM.
- Early dismissal (students being picked up for appointments, etc.) will take place at the main entrance of Howitt East.
- Visitors will use the main entrance at Howitt East.

To access our [Virtual Backpack](#), you can go to the district website at Farmingdaleschools.org and select [“Weldon E. Howitt Middle School”](#) under “Schools.” Please take some time to review

the district Attendance Policy, Code of Conduct, Emergency Planning Guide, as well as other notices in this folder: [Important District Information and Policies](#).

Schedules were posted on the Parent Portal this past Friday, 8/23. If there is an issue with your child's schedule, please [use this link to complete a Schedule Change Request Form](#). After you complete the form, a counselor will follow up with you.

I firmly believe that schools of excellence are created as a result of the collaborative efforts of staff, students, parents, and the community. As we are now set to begin, I know that through this partnership, our students will have the greatest chance to learn, grow, and achieve their goals. I am incredibly proud to serve as principal of Howitt Middle School and to share in this important journey with you.

On behalf of the Howitt Middle School staff, I am happy to once again welcome you and your children to the 2025-2026 school year. We look forward to seeing you all very soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Gavalas". The signature is stylized with a large, looped "M" and a cursive "Gavalas".

Mike Gavalas
HMS Principal
[@HowittMS](#)