

MABELLE B. AVERY MIDDLE SCHOOL



GUIDEBOOK 2023-2024

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**Mabelle B. Avery Middle School
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Somers, CT 06071**

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Welcome to Middle School!!!

The staff of Mabelle B. Avery Middle School (MBA) is excited for the opportunity to work in partnership with families on behalf of the students in Somers. *To prepare each student for their high school experience, MBA Middle School strives to provide a rigorous learning environment that inspires student engagement and motivation through a variety of curricular and extracurricular learning opportunities. Collaboratively, we work toward creating a safe, welcoming, respectful, inclusive, and balanced learning environment that meets each individual student's needs.*

In an effort to make the transition to middle school smooth, the *MBA Guidebook* has been created to provide general information about the school, review routines and policies, and answer frequently asked questions. In addition to the information we have provided in the *MBA Guidebook*, we encourage you to read the *MBA Parent/Student Handbook* and to reach out to us with any additional questions you have.

Open communication is an essential component of the educational process. In an effort to keep families included in the happenings at MBA, email blasts through the School Messenger system will be sent, a monthly newsletter will be published, grade level curricular newsletters will be shared, and the webpage will be kept up-to-date. Additionally, we encourage parents to use the PowerSchool Parent Portal to check grades and attendance. Of course, we also welcome communications through email, phone, and conferences. In order to ensure the school has access to the best contact information, please be sure to update your information at the beginning of each year through the PowerSchool Parent Portal.

Over the next three years, students will experience a multitude of opportunities to show their growth academically, socially, and emotionally. The middle school years serve as the starting point of independence where students begin to make decisions that impact academic success, extracurricular engagement, and social cohesion while parents begin to take a “guide-on-the-side” role in supporting the decision-making process. It is a tricky balance, and the staff at MBA is here to assist!

We encourage students to be enthusiastically involved, and we encourage parents to be advocating partners. It is our hope that through our partnership, the students have an enjoyable experience at MBA. If at any time you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call the school.

Sincerely,

Margot P. Martello
Principal

Hannah Dill
Assistant Principal

Overview

Students and Staff:

~300 students in grades 6, 7, and 8	1 Registered Nurse
Principal & Assistant Principal	10 Paraprofessionals
32 certified teachers	4 Tutors
1 School Counselor	1 Social Worker
1 Shared Behavior Analyst	1 School Psychologist
2 Administrative Assistants	2 Entrance Monitors
4 Custodians	2 Cafeteria Personnel

MBA operates on a 6-day schedule cycle with core academics including Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Science and World Languages taught over the course of three trimesters.

Other unique components of the schedule consist of the following:

- Ten periods of Language Arts during the six-day cycle.
- Unified Arts program (Art, Technology, and Life Skills) on a trimester basis.
- World Language: grades 7 & 8 French or Spanish (every day).
- Three high school level classes: French 1 or Spanish 1, and Algebra 1.
- Band and Chorus for each grade level meets every day (elective).
- Team planning and collaboration time for teachers.
- Homeroom period assigned at the start of period 1 each day.
- Advisory program every two weeks with planned activities throughout the school year.
- Literacy & Math Skills classes offered as needed.
- Success Skills Seminar class taught three days each cycle to all grade 6 students.
- Special Education teachers assigned to each grade level.

What are some of my responsibilities as the parent of a middle school child?

- Insist on good attendance and good classroom preparation; avoid bringing your child to school late. Your child needs to be seated in period 1 homeroom after going to his/her locker by 7:35 or will be considered tardy.
- Visit team blogs for homework assignments and other related information.
- Check our web page for information including parent letters and upcoming events.
- Be aware of the information listed in the *MBA Student-Parent Handbook* accessible on the school website.
- Know your child's schedule and teachers.
- Network with your child's grade level team and support services personnel (school counselor, social worker, school psychologist).
- Avoid perpetuating rumors; call the school and discuss your concerns.
- Ask your child to share their homework log with you to support their daily assignments.
- Provide a quiet, distraction-free study space and time at home.
- Be connected to the parent portal to monitor grades and work completion.
- Be supportive of your child; we all have our good and bad days. Remember that being an adolescent is not easy some days.
- Get to know your child's friends.
- Monitor use of electronic devices.
- Network with other parents.
- Make sure we have your updated email address and other contact information.

General Information

***Important: Parent Drop Off and Pick Up:** If you are dropping off or picking up your child during school hours, you must come into the greeter at the front entrance with your identification.

Parent drop off in a.m.: Please enter through the far end of the parking lot in front of the school. Pull forward through the main circle directly in front of the main entrance. Release your child on the sidewalk side of your car. **Do not pass cars that are discharging students unless directed to do so by school staff or police. Wait until the car ahead of you pulls away.** Once the last car pulls away, the next group may pull forward. **Please do not discharge students into the parking lot - wait for a spot along the curb.**

Parent pick up in p.m.: Our system is designed to avoid having students walking through the parking lot when cars are moving. For pick-ups at the end of the school day, we ask that parents pull into the circle upon arrival (no earlier than 2:15). Students being picked up by car are dismissed as a group at 2:20 and are directed to vehicles. Parents/guardians are discouraged from parking in the Library parking lot as it is reserved for Library patrons.

Walkers: Students who cross Vision Boulevard must use the crosswalk near the central office doors. This reduces the amount of foot traffic through the MBA parking lot.

Visitors: During school hours, all visitors should come to the main entrance and report to the greeter. Please use the door security monitoring buzz-in system and announce your name and purpose of your visit. Your Driver's License is required. Upon entering, report directly to the greeter for our sign-in/sign-out procedure. No visitor is allowed in the classrooms, halls etc. without office permission. Visitors and parents may not stop by any classroom during school hours as this may disrupt instruction.

Homeroom: 7:35 a.m. - 7:42 a.m. Homeroom is considered the first 7 minutes of the period one class for each student. Each student, upon arrival to school should go to their locker and report immediately to homeroom. In homeroom, students quietly watch morning announcements regarding the upcoming school activities and other announcements. The Pledge of Allegiance and a Moment of Silence occur every day. Every classroom has a TV that displays activity dates and times and pictures of classroom activities, including morning announcements.

Late arrivals: Students are considered tardy if they do not check into homeroom prior by 7:35 a.m. Students are required to obtain a late pass from the greeter for entry into school. Parents are asked to sign their child in at the greeter's station and/or have a note explaining the reason for tardiness. All tardies are considered unexcused unless it is a result of a documented appointment. The school tardy policy is explained in detail in the student handbook.

Early dismissal: Students, presenting a parent note, fill out an early release pass obtained at the greeter station upon arrival to school. Parents are required to come into the building and sign a student out with the greeter when picking up. Identification is required for signing out a child. Parents must also sign students back in upon return to school.

Absence: Parents are asked to call the school in the morning prior to 7:30 a.m. to report a student's absence. The student's name, date, and reason for absence are required. Dial the district number 749-2270, then press 4, then 1. The school will call to remind parents to verify absences if parents do not call in.

Unexcused absence: If the school office has not been notified of student illness or extenuating circumstances, it is considered an unexcused absence. Family vacations are not considered excused absences. While teachers will allow students to make up missed work, tests, and quizzes, they are not required to prepare work in advance for a vacation-related absence. In addition, teachers are not required to re-teach work or to tutor students when they return. It is the responsibility of the student to complete the assigned work that needs to be done upon his or her return to school.

Dismissal: Five additional minutes have been built into the last block to assist with dismissal procedures, make end-of-day announcements, and distribute school notices. Students should leave the building for home unless they are in an after school activity, receiving extra help, or assigned a detention or community service.

Student Handbook: The *MBA Student-Parent Handbook* may be accessed on the **school website**. Students and parents should review the handbook together before or during the first week of school. Please sign-off electronically indicating you and your child have read and discussed its contents. The handbook is an important resource regarding school expectations, services, rules, and policies.

Emergency forms: Please review and edit as necessary the emergency and contact information via the Infosnap electronic portal.

Technology at MBA:

MBA offers a technology-rich environment for students. In September, each student receives a personal Chromebook for the school year. It is mandatory to have it charged daily in order to participate thoroughly in the classroom experience. Students are responsible for returning the Chromebook at the end of the year in the same condition it was issued. Parents are strongly encouraged to purchase insurance for the Chromebook.

Every student is assigned a Somers district gmail account which is used to access the Google Suite of products (docs, sheets, presentations, Noodletools for citing research, and more). Instruction for all of these devices is given throughout the school year when completing classroom activities, research opportunities, assessments, and assignments.

Bus passes: Bus passes are not issued due to overcrowding on the buses, except for extenuating circumstances (child care). Parents must submit a note/email to the main office requesting a bus pass. Students may bring this note to the office in the morning and pick up a bus pass during lunch. Students cannot change bus assignments without prior notification from the main office (a pass will be issued to the student by the office). Transportation is provided to students from home to school and back only.

Bus discipline: To ensure the safety of all students, bus rules and regulations are highlighted in the student handbook. The bus driver can issue bus tickets for inappropriate behavior, which may result in consequences assigned by an administrator, including loss of bus privileges.

Web pages/Team Blogs: Check team blogs and/or individual teacher web pages for assignments, homework, tests and quizzes. This allows teachers to inform students and parents of upcoming requirements for classes. Go to the MBA website and click on the link to the staff directory.

Lunch: Students may bring their lunch to school or purchase lunch from a variety of items. Parents are encouraged to enroll in the [Cafeteria POS system](#). This allows you to create an account, deposit money and monitor your child's purchases. There are 3 lunch waves: Grade 6 eats from 10:46-11:16; Grade 7 from 11:32-12:02; and Grade 8 from 12:18-12:48. The lunch menu is posted on the MBA web page for your convenience. If you would like to cap how much your child can spend at each lunch, please contact Rob Wilson at rob.wilson@somers.k12.ct.us.

Advisory: Advisory will meet roughly every two weeks (and as needed). Advisory lessons will focus on setting and monitoring personal goals, assemblies, and the theme for the school year. Advisories are 30 minutes long and are arranged by grade level. Through the lessons over the course of the school year, it is hoped that students forge a connection with the Advisory teacher.

Cell phone use is prohibited during school hours except for educational purposes as directed by a classroom teacher. This will be strictly enforced. Students may use the main office telephone with permission from the office. Students may also use their phones during lunch time in a responsible and limited manner. Important messages called into the school office by parents will be given to students.

Early dismissal for inclement weather: School requires an alternate plan for students going home early due to unforeseen circumstances. It is imperative that parents and students review this plan so students know what they are to do if there is a change to their after school routine. This reduces anxiety for everyone. Check the district web page, local news or radio for updates. We will also push out notifications through our automated notification system.

School supply lists recommended for each grade can be viewed on the school website.

Summer math work and reading lists by grade level are located in the main office and on our website. Reading lists are also available at the public library and at local bookstores.

Change in address, telephone number or family status: Records are updated annually at the start of the school year through the PowerSchool Parent Portal registration system. Please submit any other changes via the web portal to ensure accurate records. Contact the main office if you have any questions.

Textbooks: Students are responsible for all textbooks and other resources issued to them. At the end of the year, if materials have not been returned to the school, letters will be sent home to try to recoup the items.

Star Student Awards: Students are recognized monthly for demonstrating good conduct and effort. Every teacher selects one student. The teachers distribute certificates to the selected students in a small ceremony.

Honor Roll is awarded quarterly to students in grades 7 and 8 who have met scholastic requirements. Names are submitted to local newspapers.

Frequently Asked Questions

How to arrange a conference with a teacher, team and/or school counselor?

Call the school office, send a note to your child's teacher or email the teacher to set up a conference. To email a teacher, simply type the first name.last name@somers.k12.ct.us.

Does the school have a dress code? Students are expected to dress comfortably and appropriately for school. The manner in which students dress should not interfere with the educational process. Please refer to the student handbook about the school dress code policy.

What if my child has some special problems or family circumstances? Special circumstances will sometimes arise, such as family issues, lengthy illness, learning difficulties, or health problems. Parents should set up a conference with the child's team to discuss any necessary special arrangements. In cases that require additional assistance, please contact the school counselor or the principal.

How do I know what is going on at school? You will receive an email, call, or MBA email blast with information. The MBA website at <http://www.somers.k12.ct.us> and grade level team pages that can be accessed from the school website and also list many school events. The monthly newsletter, *M.B.A. R.O.C.K.S.*, is another source of information. The MBA sign located outside the building gives some information as well.

What should my child wear to P. E. classes? All students are required to change into sportswear for P.E. classes. Required clothing: shorts, sweatshirts, t-shirts, sneakers. Students receive personal lockers with locks for gym belongings at the beginning of the school year.

Why do students get detentions? There are two types of detentions: teacher-issued and office-issued. Each is given to help students develop self-discipline regarding their behavior. Detentions are held after school until 3:00 p.m. Arrangements for student pick up should be made prior to the date of the detention. Parents are notified of detention by telephone or a discipline report form. Saturday Detention is issued by the office for more serious offenses and goes from 8:00-11:00 on Saturday mornings as needed.

When can a parent request homework? Students with excused absences from school **2 or more days** are eligible for homework requests. Parents can call or email the main office or team leader with student name and dates requested. Parents are encouraged to make requests at least 24 hours in advance to allow teachers time to prepare assignments. Homework can be picked up in the main office after 2:30 p.m. Students with unexcused absences are required to make arrangements with their teachers for schoolwork. You may also check the team blogs for daily homework assignments.

What school programs specifically help my child transition from the elementary school to the middle school and then to the high school? Orientation programs are designed to ease the transition for students and parents. Step-Up Day for all new incoming students is scheduled in May/June. 6th Grade-New Student Orientation occurs at the start of the school year. Open House for all sixth, seventh and eighth grade parents is held in September. Parent conferences are held in early November. Dates for all of these events may be found on the school website and you will be notified by email to go to SignUp Genius for you to make your appointment.

MBA **Clubs and Organizations**

All students are strongly encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities. Research shows over and over again a strong correlation between student extracurricular involvement and overall success in school.

Yearbook Club: Members design and publish the MBA yearbook. Students gather information, take pictures of events and then make layouts for pages.

Drama Club: Produces a yearly spring performance by MBA students for the school and community. Members work on all aspects of the school play. Auditions for the cast are typically held in the second quarter; students are selected and attend rehearsals every day until the production in the spring. Behind the scenes, students build and decorate sets, learn lighting and sound systems, run the curtains, collect costumes, make props, print tickets and publicity posters, apply make-up, make the program, sell refreshments, and perform various other duties. About 100 students participate in drama, and a number of teachers and/or parents serve as volunteers.

Environmental Club: This club works with students who are interested in protecting the environment. Various learning opportunities and projects will be coordinated to actively engage students in environmental activities.

Art Club: This club provides students with a structured opportunity to continue to explore their artistic talents. From personal projects to projects that give back to the school community, students will enjoy a variety of artistic projects.

Percussion Club: Feel the beat with the Percussion Club by exploring new instruments and playing percussion to develop and work on new pieces of music highlighting the important role percussion instruments play.

Games Club: This club is a fun way to socialize with their peers by exploring different games. With a specific focus on board games, students have a chance to put the video games aside for a little bit and socialize face-to-face without headphones! Students will play some familiar and less-familiar games and hopefully come home with some ideas for family fun too!

Homework Club: This is a place where students can work on their homework while still in the school building. The advisor for the program is there to assist students as needed, but essentially oversee that students are beginning their homework and are effectively moving through their academic practice.

Book Club: This is a monthly book club where students read the Nutmeg Nominees and discuss them with their peers and adults in a safe and respectful environment. Students will read the ten nominees over the course of the year culminating in a celebration where each student votes for their favorite book.

Student Government is comprised of a group of students dedicated to improving their school community. Student Government meets throughout the school year. Responsibilities include: food drives, fundraising, school spirit ideas, school wide governmental issues, grade 7 & 8 dances, and grade 6 socials.

Jr. Beta Club is reserved for eighth grade students who made high honors in all three trimesters of their seventh grade year, as well as high honors the first trimester of their eighth grade year. Furthermore, students must have 5 hours of community service. Students must notify the Junior Beta Club sponsor (Mrs. Gioscia) of their interest in the club in September, as well as obtain a service hour log. Working with teachers and support staff, administration will review discipline history, attitude and citizenship before a student is inducted into the Junior Beta Club at MBA. As long as all requirements are met, students will be officially invited to join Junior Beta Club at the end of trimester one. An induction ceremony for National Junior Beta Club will be held in January.

Ski Club sponsors several trips for skiers and boarders to Berkshire East. This club is open to all students. Lessons may be available for new skiers.

GSA Club aims to create a safe, welcoming, and accepting school environment for all youth, regardless of race or gender identity. The club provides a sense of community and a space for LGBTQ+ and allied youth to build social connections, support and to improve peer relationships. Our approach is through an educational lens respecting the dignity of every individual. With this approach in mind we seek to create an atmosphere of understanding and tolerance which will combat any form of injustices, discrimination or harassment/bullying.

After School Sports

- Interscholastic sports consist of Field Hockey and Cross Country running in the fall.
- Intramurals include Fitness Club and Girls/Boys Basketball.

Physical Exams for Sports: In order for a student to participate in interscholastic sports at the middle school (Field Hockey & Cross Country), he/she must have a physical exam. Somers Board of Education policy (Admin. Reg: 6145.2) requires a physical exam prior to practicing and playing in any interscholastic sport. All physical exams completed within the last 13 months are considered valid provided the athlete sustains no serious illness or injury during that period of time. Students and parents must also sign a form stating they have reviewed the district concussion policy.

Other School Activities - Each year there are a number of special events and activities, including dances, assemblies, spirit days, and fundraisers.

Please Note: For safety reasons students are not permitted to remain on school grounds if they are not participating in a planned after school activity. If they are not involved in an after school activity and supervised by an adult, students must either take their designated bus home or be picked up promptly at dismissal time.