



# The Informal Guide for Parents 2017-18

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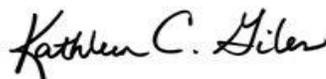
## Introduction

As a boarding and day school with rich curricular and co-curricular programs, Middlesex offers community members several Handbooks and Guides to support a common understanding of the endeavor. **The Student Handbook (the “Handbook”)** contains the rules, policies, and expectations that govern student life; the brochure “**Life in the Middlesex Community**” sets the expectations and understandings that guide our life together. The **Curriculum Guide** and **Student Handbook** explain academic and curricular policy and offerings. Along with the **Directory** (formerly and affectionately known as the “Face Book”!), these documents provide much of the background information for student experience at Middlesex. We expect students and parents to review these materials, and in particular we require students and parents to read and acknowledge the contents of the **Handbook**, as the **Handbook** sets forth discipline and discipline procedure as well as policy.

All Middlesex students can choose to work with the school **Planner**, an assignment notebook customized to our schedule, calendar, and reference materials. Planners are available at the opening of school. Limited copies of the Planner are available for parent purchase, but we will also send parents the electronic pdf version should parents wish simply to download the materials for their own reference. While we include the **basic school calendar** in these published materials, the best place to find updated calendar information is on the website. We will also be publishing on our website a schedule update, primarily for in-school use, but potentially of interest to parents as well. **The POND** is our parent e-newsletter, and parents are automatically subscribed and can re-subscribe if addresses or other information changes by going to the “Parents” tab on the website. Likewise, parents can access billing information and grades and comments by establishing access to **My Backpack**, again via the “Parents” tab on the website. If you have any questions or problems with My Backpack, please contact Joe Alford, Chief Technology Officer, at 978-371-6521 or jalford@mxschool.edu

This **Informal Guide for Parents** attempts to provide parents with further insight into the culture of the School and to answer some frequently asked questions about how we operate. Please note that the **Handbook** puts forth School policy; this **Informal Guide** intends to provide information in an interstitial, “what-I-wish-my-teenager-would-tell-me” way. While there is a balance to be struck between the student’s “ownership” of the experience and his/her development into a responsible communicator and parents’ desire to anticipate and participate, we hope that by articulating some practices, traditions, and expectations, parents will feel better informed and know where to go with questions that might arise. *This Informal Guide is specifically NOT a comprehensive parent handbook; rather, it is intended as an informal, hopefully helpful reference to student experience at Middlesex.*

And while we are on the topic of “experience,” one of our parents offered this valuable note of wisdom at the end of his child’s time at Middlesex. He said, “to learn from the experience, the student has to *have* the experience – we, as parents, have to let our kids *have* the experiences from which they can learn, and those include the good experiences and the not-so-good experiences. We can’t control it all and make it all the way we want it forever.” Growing up is a process, rather than an event, and parents can expect a child’s time at Middlesex (or at any high school) to include highs and lows, struggles and triumphs. To allow our children to develop the critical traits of resiliency, stamina, courage, and personal generosity, among others, we as parents need to be ready to allow our children to own their experience and learn to solve their problems. We are all on the same team in wanting them to grow up healthy, strong, balanced, hopeful people, and we know those to be worthy goals over the period of our work together.



Kathleen C. Giles  
Head of School

## **Communication Philosophy and Expectations**

As we say often, wherever a Middlesex student sleeps at night, he or she belongs to a residential school community that takes full advantage of a twenty-four hour day and a seven-day week to accomplish its purposes. So day students, as well as boarding students, have complex and unique schedules, and all students take some time to acclimate to the expectations the School has for organizing one's time and belongings and managing one's responsibilities.

The transition into high school is more than moving from grade 8 to grade 9, or for some schools, from a culminating 9<sup>th</sup> grade to a new school as a sophomore. Being 14, 15, and 16 for most people marks the entrance into a new phase of life, a time of intense self-awareness as one's body changes and one's brain matures in uneven, exhilarating, and frightening ways. The compliant, even-tempered 13-year-old who communicates "everything" can seemingly overnight become a moody, irritable, uncommunicative 14-year-old, leaving parents to wonder what event, what cause, what "whatever" triggered the change. Usually, the event/cause/trigger has to do with growing up and needing to individuate, to become more independent, to assume responsibility for one's self and one's future; these are normal biological and psychological processes that we all go through, but to parents focused on the here and now with perhaps fuzzy recollections of their own individuation processes, they can seem like catastrophic and frankly sad changes from the younger child who loved to be parented. It's important to remember that while we all go through it, this growing up process (not event, but process) is unique to each individual person and is absolutely critical to building a young person's self-confidence and ability to function well as an independent and responsible being.

It is also important to remember that when a young person joins a new school community like ours, he/she will invest an enormous amount of energy getting to know hundreds of new people and "building the nest" at school that feels safe and comfortable. That work takes time and energy, and it can be consuming for the young student. It's also important to understand that jumping into a high school environment means that age-group definitions no longer apply; the varsity team can have 13-19 year olds on it; some of the older boys have beards and mustaches; and these older and very confident students have been practicing for years longer to earn their places on casts and crews and teams. So patience and optimism are always the order of the day when one is living and working in a high school, and those two qualities are never more important than in the ways parents communicate with their children during transition times.

Our expectation is that all students will take responsibility for themselves – for their personal organization, conduct, performance, and achievement. At a time in their lives, developmentally, when adolescents want to push away from parents, define themselves as individuals, and test their capacity for independence, we believe that the school environment is a terrific place to establish that independence and take the ensuing responsibility for one's self. As the process of maturing is quite individual, usually there is a significant amount of growth that accompanies the transition to productive independence, in terms of managing expectations and responsibilities and figuring out how to live and work successfully in the community. There is no set schedule for this growth, and it is often accompanied by experiences from which students learn a great deal, even if the experiences are unpleasant or difficult at the time. Students get good help from each other and particularly, from peer role models, in this work; and at Middlesex, they also have the invaluable support of teachers, heads of house, coaches, and advisors.

The role of the advisor: The advisor is the "point person" for a student, and while it takes time to develop these strong relationships, usually the advising relationship is a defining element of a student's experience. Subject to the vagaries of special schedules and needs (e.g., a Monday holiday; or the need to study for a quiz next period and thus skip or postpone an advisor-advisee meeting), advisors meet

regularly on an individual basis with each advisee; they are in steady contact with the advisee's teachers and work with the advisee to create productive, balanced lives at school. Each teenager presents a different set of strengths and challenges, as well as a different personality and set of circumstances, and advisors do their best to meet each student where he or she is and act as a mentor and life coach, of sorts, for that student. The advisor's first responsibility, as advisor, is to support the student through the growth processes of high school. All of our advisors are faculty members with full teaching, administrative, and co-curricular responsibilities, and by being fully engaged in the life of the school, advisors have a unique understanding of advisees' contexts and lives. After their first semester, students get to choose their advisors, and most students invest in those relationships and change no more than once during their time at Middlesex. Students have the opportunity to renew the advising relationship or seek a change each spring for the upcoming year.

Communication between advisors and advisees: Advisors and advisees meet regularly, but informal communication occurs fairly constantly, on a casual basis in class, on sidelines, in the Dining Hall, etc. While advisees are encouraged to call advisors if they encounter problems at odd times, or at times when a faculty member is not on duty or not on campus, we do not encourage texts or on-line contact other than email (and not email, in a crisis – a phone call). **Faculty members at Middlesex are asked not to text with students and are asked not to “follow” or “friend” current students or their parents on Facebook or on other forms of social media.** *On campus, when school is in session, the Health Center will answer the phone or answer the door at any hour of the day or night should a student need help.*

Communication between advisor and parents: **The advisor's second, but still very important, responsibility, is to be the “point person” for the advisee's parents with the School. If questions or problems arise, parents should contact advisors rather than individual teachers or coaches, and advisors will research the problem or question and get back to parents with information.** Parents can expect to hear from advisors early in the year and then periodically thereafter, with formal “advisor letters” in January and in June summarizing the semester's work and life for the advisee at school. Just as they develop individual relationship with advisees, advisors develop individual relationships with an advisee's parents, in terms of communication. While advisors will try to pass along good news as well as possible problems, no news from advisors generally is good news during the course of the busy school term. Advisors may not have instant answers, and in the absence of an emergency, parents can expect that advisors will need time to research questions or problems.

Parents can contact advisors by email or by the phone number that appears in the school directory. Again, faculty members are asked not to text or engage on social media with parents of current students.

A few final thoughts about the advisor relationship: The relationship between an advisor and advisee has to be based on the relationship between those two people, within the boundaries of the school-based relationship. Often these relationships turn into lifelong friendships, but they begin with advisor as mentor and coach. These relationships are, again, unique, and they might not take shape exactly as parents might want to shape them or prescribe. The advisor makes no pretensions to parenting and, instead, offers a different source of support, encouragement, and coaching for the student. There are many times during high school when parents' frustrations legitimately mount, and at those times, it is important to try to separate the issues or problems that pertain to the child's growth and development – and therefore engage the advisor – from those that sit squarely with parents going through changes in relationships with children as children grow up. Advisors can offer sympathy and often empathy, but they can only offer advice for the former issues!

## Communication Logistics

Permissions: Student safety as our top priority, and the rules and practices about permissions are outlined in the Handbook and not repeated here. However, it is important to note that in the August materials each year, parents are asked to indicate general permissions for students regarding everything from swimming in the pond to driving with others to media references; those permissions are communicated to all Heads of House. Please attend carefully to those permissions. Additionally, all Heads of House maintain separate “permissions” lines for parents to use in inviting and authorizing off-campus visits by their student to off-campus locations. Please be sure to think carefully about permissions and communicate your decisions to your student. Please direct any questions to the Dean of Students’ Office.

Communication during the school day: For most questions or inquiries, we try to work with a 24 hour response time for routine questions. Anything sent on Saturday and Sunday should be thought of as coming in on Monday morning, as we do not expect teachers to be checking their email on Saturday and Sunday, or after 4pm on weekdays. Middlesex faculty members often have school duties that run late into the evenings, even on the weekends, as well as their own families and lives, and we appreciate our parents’ understanding of the unusual time demands boarding school life makes on adults.

Likewise, we appreciate our parents’ understanding that not all self-reported adolescent crises are, in fact, emergencies. After a demanding or disappointing day, some students relax into the comfort of parents’ sympathies, and while a student can emerge from the interaction feeling comforted and energized, sometimes parents are left feeling worried and upset – the students having been successful in transferring those emotions to parents and unburdening themselves! Parenting is an emotional, intensely personal experience, so parents can and should expect some trying moments, and we hope parents will take some deep breaths and sort through the experience or communication prior to deciding what steps to take next, if any.

Communication at night and on weekends: Most of our faculty members live on campus, both in dormitories and in free-standing homes, and so are present and available should special needs arise. However, faculty members do not work all night, every night, and so for routine matters we ask parents to communicate with faculty members during normal business hours. In the evening, faculty members are readily available to assist students in the dorms and in and around campus (study hall, library duty, roaming). At 10:30pm, when all students should either be checked into dormitories or at home, there are faculty members in every dormitory on duty and available in case of emergencies.

*On campus, when school is in session, the Health Center will answer the phone or answer the Health Center door at any hour of the day or night.*

Phones on campus: While we actively discourage cell phone use during the school day, most Middlesex students, day or boarding, come to campus with a cell phone. AT&T and Verizon get the best reception on campus.

**IT IS IMPORTANT TO OUR COMMUNITY THAT WE CONTINUE TO INVEST IN THE STRENGTH OF OUR FACE-TO-FACE RELATIONSHIPS, AND WE ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO LIMIT THE USE OF THEIR CELL PHONES DURING THE ACADEMIC DAY AND THEIR STUDY TIME. TO THAT END, WE ASK THAT STUDENTS REFRAIN FROM USE OF CELL PHONES WHEN THEY ARE IN THE CHAPEL, THEATER, OR ANY CLASSROOM, AND WHILE WALKING AROUND CAMPUS. STUDENTS WHO WISH TO MAKE OR RECEIVE A PHONE CALL SHOULD DO SO FROM A FIXED POSITION OUTSIDE OF A SCHOOL BUILDING.**

For boarding students, land-line access in the student's room is available on request through the Technology Department. Land-line telephones are also available, again by request only. Boarding students are asked to make these requests via the mid-summer opening of school materials.

**CONTACTING STUDENTS DURING THE SCHOOL DAY AND STUDY HALL: AS THE RECEIPT OF A TEXT OR A CALL DURING A CLASS IS DISRUPTIVE, WE RESPECTFULLY REQUEST THAT PARENTS NOT TEXT OR CALL STUDENTS DURING CLASSES OR DURING EVENING STUDY HOURS (7:30-9:30PM), WHEN STUDENTS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO USE THEIR PHONES. THE SAFEST WAY TO AVOID A PROBLEM IS TO SET UP A TIME TO CONNECT OUTSIDE OF THE CLASS DAY, DURING A STUDENT'S FREE TIME.**

We realize that parents of day students may need to contact their children during the day as plans change. Middlesex students are very busy during the academic day, and parents should not ask or expect students to answer phone, text, or email messages immediately, nor should they worry if four-to-six hours go by before the students return contact. If there is an emergency, a call to the main school number (978) 369-2550) is the best way to get an immediate message to the student.

**Contacting Heads of House:** All Heads of House have permissions lines separate from personal phone lines. Parents can leave messages and permissions on those lines; however, issues needing an immediate response should be communicated via email or direct phone contact.

### **Emergency Communication**

For boarding students, the student's Head of House is available after-hours for emergencies. Likewise, while parents assume responsibility for day students after-hours, the day student's Head of House is also available for support.

While school is in session, the Health Center is staffed 24 hrs a day and can be reached at (978) 371-6583. For all students and parents, the following people are available in emergencies after-hours while school is in session:

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Title</u></b>	<b><u>Home phone #</u></b>	<b><u>Cell Phone #</u></b>
Kathy Giles	Head of School	(978) 371-0922	(978) 987-3203
Dan Sheff	Dean of Students	(860) 417-9215	(860) 417-9215
Matt Crozier	Chief Operating Officer	(978) 394-2185	(978) 394-2185
Admin on Duty	Administrator on Duty		(978) 760-1906
Health Center	Health Center, On Duty Nurse	(978) 371-6583	

**If there is a general emergency at school,** you will receive an email notification as well as an AlertNow text message and automated phone call. For these reasons, it is very important to keep your parent contact information up-to-date in My Backpack and with your POND subscription.

**Snow Days and Free Days:** On rare occasions, we might cancel or alter the school schedule to accommodate weather problems or other school events. The formal announcement will go out to the school via email and to parents on email and Alert Now (for weather-related announcements). It will also appear on the front page of the website.

**My Backpack:** On the website under "Parents," the My Backpack resource enables parents to manage financial obligations, review marking-period grades and comments (quarters and semesters) and advisor letters (semesters); and access the Student Directory with parent contact information. If you are having trouble with My Backpack, please contact Joe Alford, Chief Technology Officer, at [jalford@mxschool.edu](mailto:jalford@mxschool.edu) or (978) 371-6521.

Parent-student communication: It is very important for students to know when and how parents' expectations are separate from or may exceed ours. We strongly urge that you establish your expectations with your student on the following topics:

- Your expectations regarding communication with you (do you expect a daily call, email, or text?)
- Your student's permissions, as you have established them in the Deans' Office permissions forms
- Use of phone and data contract (how much texting and data use you will pay for?)
- Overall spending at school (from bookstore and grill to pizza delivery and on-line shopping)
- On-line time in general (from gaming to social networking)
- Sleep (research indicates that teenagers spend 7-8 hours per day on screen-time; how much data use will you fund after our Internet shuts off in the late evening)?

Technology information and support: Most students bring a laptop to school, as the majority of our assignments (including papers and lab reports) must be typed prior to being submitted. There is public computer and printer access in each dorm common room, Eliot Hall and in the Library. Information on recommended computer purchases and protocols come to families in the mid-summer opening of school information, and the Technology Department can answer any further questions.

During orientation, all students will receive assistance setting up their Middlesex email accounts, which we expect them to check daily. The Technology Department is a resource for students with regard to helpdesk-style questions and problems with computers. We have a limited number of laptops that go out on loan while ailing computers are being fixed. We do not provide iPad or cell phone support.

As stated in our Handbook, Middlesex does make use of filters in compliance with CIPA regulations but does not filter out social networking sites. We review with students our Acceptable Use Policy, which reminds students that *whatever is posted on-line, whether from a device using the school system or whether from a privately-owned device, must be considered public information for school citizenship purposes*, and that adopting an alias or using someone else's account in an inappropriate way is considered an integrity violation. Furthermore, students should be aware that they will be held accountable for sharing or "re-posting" offensive content, even if the student is not the original author.

Acceptable Use of Personal Technology: Please review our Acceptable Use Policy in our Handbook, and again, please note that each advisor will review this policy with each advisee again once school has begun. The most important idea regarding use of personal technology is that the School regards published (sent or shared) images or words, regardless of the device used or its ownership, as behavior subject to the School's rules and expectations. Personal ownership of any device is irrelevant for the purposes of our rules and expectations and there is no expectation of privacy regarding shared or published, in any way, shape or form, images, expressions or information.

## **A brief Middlesex lexicon**

**The Barron Room:** a large meeting room located in Ware Hall (the Dining Hall), to the immediate right of the front door. The Parents' Association holds most meetings here.

**The Cage:** the basketball courts in the Atkins Athletic Center

**Check-in and sign-out:** for all students, required procedures for checking in with adult supervisors

**Choices:** the fall semester orientation program for freshmen

**Connections:** Fall semester orientation program for sophomores

**Cut:** an unexcused absence from a mandatory school obligation.

**DSP:** day student parking lot (at the rear of the gym/ice rink) where students park. For 2017-18, Day Students will park in the "Acorn Lot" located at the first turn on the north drive.

**Detention:** any student, day or boarding, who has run afoul of the discipline system can be required to serve Thursday morning or Saturday evening detention, supervised by a faculty member.

**Early Lunch:** lunch opens at 11:30am and if a student has a free period at that time, he or she can go to early lunch (and stay through regular lunch!).

**ECI:** Early Check In (evening), a punishment for failing to meet dorm expectations and rules.

**FCD:** Freedom from Chemical Dependency program for all sophomores in November.

**FIC:** Faculty member In Charge – duty rotation of faculty for meals and weekend supervision.

**FOS:** Freedom of Speech student band and concert nights – great social nights for the students.

**Frafty:** Free afternoon (a wonderful freak of a schedule!)

**Free Day:** In the fall and winter (and sometimes in the spring), the Head of School sometimes cancels a day of classes to allow the community to celebrate, recover, or simply catch its breath as needed.

**The Green Room:** The Green Room is our blackbox theater, located in the Theater's basement.

**Green Rooms:** bi-annual student performances from the Arts 3 class (student-only attendance!)

**The Grill:** the café/snack bar located in the Student Center. Open afternoons and early evenings.

**Higg lawn:** the grassy area in front of Higginson House, often used for event parking.

**ISL:** Independent School League: our athletic league of 15 area independent schools.

**ISP:** independent study project, an option for seniors who design an individualized course.

**L-block:** the last day of the school schedule, often used for labs or for extra help.

**MOODLE:** the in-house on-line management program for some course work and permissions.

**Oates Lane:** a neighborhood of faculty homes near the Head's House on the southern end of campus.

**On Bounds:** punishment for failing to meet dorm and general school expectations.

**Prize Day:** a ceremony that takes place the day before graduation at which all academic and school-based athletic prizes are awarded.

**Prox (or "proxy" or "zebra") card:** the ID/swipe card that opens all dorm doors and works at the grill and bookstore.

**RecFit:** the required recreational fitness program for juniors and seniors who opt out of interscholastic athletics.

**Sleep-in:** free (no scheduled class or commitment) period(s) at the start of the school day. Students are not required to be at school until their first scheduled commitment. All students have a sleep-in on Thursday during Faculty Meeting, after which classes start at 9:15am.

**StuFac:** The lounge area at the back of Ware Hall that houses the Grill. StuFac is the site of many Saturday night dances and activities.

**The Terry Room:** is the big school "living room" in Eliot Hall that doubles as an admissions greeting area and a reception/performance venue.

**The Turf:** the artificial turf athletic fields (field hockey in the fall, boys' lacrosse in the spring) and tennis courts, accessed by going out behind Eliot Hall and across the bridge.

**The Think:** the theater-in-the-rink standing in for our usual theatre during its renovation.

## Life on campus

The “Life in the Middlesex Community” brochure elaborates on rules, expectations, and cultural norms around our lives together on campus. Here are some areas of interest specific to parents.

Community life for everyone, boarding and day: Middlesex is firmly committed to being a boarding school that attracts students from all over the world. The School’s schedule is designed to maximize the advantages of living in a 24/7 school community, and the School’s expectations reflect important assumptions about students’ maturity and their capacity and inclination to assume responsibility and independence. While we recognize that growing up is a process, not an event, and we provide support to students as they enter different phases of adolescence, we do work with students in the context of a boarding school community, which presumes that students live and work respectful of boundaries and rules and independent of constant parental presence and communication. We require the same commitment to community life from day students as we do from boarding students, so the evening and Saturday events that are required are required for everyone.

For those reasons, specific challenges arise for day students and families. At times our schedule changes suddenly; a Free Day gets called at the last minute; a lecture or chapel is rescheduled; a Sunday event comes up that attracts significant student attention. All of these changes pose challenges for day students and their families, who have to navigate added complexities to pick-up and drop-off routines. For younger day students, it can take some time to find a “roost” in the community, in terms of developing new friends and places to socialize, whether with boarding students or with day students. It is also usual for day students to want to be on campus for breakfast, to go home at 7:30pm or 10pm or 10:30pm in the evening and to be on campus on Sundays. There are rich returns for students, in terms of their understandings of independence and responsibility as well as their engagement in friendships and relationships with students from around the world; however, it is good to recognize the special challenges, as well, for local families who might be used to making other weekend plans.

Student leadership in community life: Senior leaders play important roles in community life. In addition to elected school officers, house **proctors** and **peer supporters** are trained to provide advice and support for fellow students. **Peer tutors** are available during afternoon L-blocks and evenings in the library, and this cadre of students undergoes training to enable them to be efficient, helpful academic resources for students, some of whom just need some added confidence and support. All seniors serve as leaders in varying capacities from editors to captains to officers.

### Parents on campus: some general thoughts:

Each of our houses has either two or three resident faculty members, with either three or two non-resident faculty affiliates so as to bring the full dorm team to six faculty members. The Head of House is the leader of the dorm team; he or she maintains the permissions line and is in charge of residential life in that house for his or her students. Dorm faculty and affiliates supervise students with their safety and well-being as the shared priority and enforce rules, policies, and expectations to those ends.

Day students are assigned to virtual “day houses.” While there is no physical structure, the “house” meets as a dorm unit (with a faculty Head of House and affiliates, proctors, etc.) for community life events, meetings, and overall discussions of specific issues or questions that need discussion.

As you can imagine, life in a dormitory with 25-37 teenagers has its moments and as a school of 402 teenagers and 168 (total) adults, our lives need careful choreography in order for everything to function well. The rules and regulations about permissions, checking in, and leaving campus are spelled out in the

Handbook, but in order to support the work of the school, please note the following expectations for parents:

- 1) When can I come to visit? While that matter largely rests with your child's schedule and wishes, all students are "free" for dinner between 5:30pm and 7:15pm (please check the calendar for a lectures, meetings, or other community life events). Students are free after their last commitments on Saturday and all day Sunday. While there is a schedule of "closed" weekends around big school events, most weekends are available for boarders to leave campus; however, often students make plans, so please check in with your students before arriving, unannounced.

At the beginning of the year, we advise parents to give new boarding students some time to acclimate. The first week of school is full of orientation and new academic work, and the weekend is highly scheduled with an all-school (square) dance and a Sunday field day. So parents might consider waiting to visit until the second weekend (or even until Parents' Weekend in October, if all is well), which is a good time to pick up anything a student might need in a room.

- 2) Please honor attendance and evening rules: While going out to dinner on a weeknight can be a great break for students, please help us help students manage their commitments by making sure students are back on campus and back at the dorm well in advance of 7:30pm, the start of study hours, or before vacation or long weekend check-ins. Students are responsible for observing the attendance and evening rules, and we can't (and don't) excuse them for being late getting back from dinner off campus.
- 3) Please honor the safety and serenity of the Circle and keep vehicle traffic to a minimum: Parents who drop off day students in the morning should do so using the North Campus entrance by the athletic facilities and should drop off students at the drop off area and parking lot. **With significant pedestrian traffic in the mornings, we ask parents to drop off day students only in the "Acorn Lot" located at the first entrance on the right along the north drive and not in front of the academic buildings.** Up until 7:30pm, parents should pick up day students at the "Acorn Lot." If a student is on campus after daylight hours, parents can arrange to pick up that student in front of Eliot Hall or Ware Hall. *For the safety of students and campus inhabitants, we greatly appreciate everyone's efforts to keep traffic around the Circle to a minimum.*
- 4) Etiquette for dorm visits: If you are visiting in the dorm, please be aware of gender sensitivities and the time of day of your visit. It is probably best, in the case of visiting a child, to have the parent of the opposite gender wait in the common room area or, at least, to be sure that it is an appropriate time to be upstairs where many children other than one's own student live. When you are visiting in the dorm, we ask that your student be with you in your student's room, and that you not be in the dorm when your student is not present unless you have cleared a special reason with the Head of House. **Please finish your visit by 7:15pm, the time study hours get organized, so the dorm can settle for the evening.**
- 5) Internet shut off and screen time: The Acceptable Use Policy that appears in the major school rules section of the Handbook outlines the public nature of communication on-line; please review this policy with your student (we will, as well). During study hours, ninth and tenth graders need to ask permission to use their computers; students are otherwise responsible for managing their own screen time. Please be aware that we have some system-wide filters that screen out problematic websites and that we turn off Internet access for freshmen, sophomores, juniors at different intervals throughout the evening. **However, if your child comes to school with a smartphone or other device equipped to be independent of our wireless network, we have**

**no way of monitoring your child's screen time short of confiscating the device; please be aware of how much data time your child is using and make sure that he or she knows your limits.** Doing so helps your child observe some screen time limits and get to sleep. In today's world of unlimited media offerings and Netflix "binge" marathons on weeknights, it is critical that we help our students understand the line between a reasonable "relaxation break" and a detrimental misuse of their most precious resource, time. Teenagers are especially susceptible to becoming lost in the vortex of streaming media, and we urge families to carefully consider whether Middlesex is the time and place for unlimited access to media services like Netflix, Hulu, HBO Go, etc. Social media and media entertainment can easily eat 4-6 hours of a teenager's day, which still has only 24 hours in it.

- 6) Vacation travel planning: Please note that the school calendar sets dates for the beginnings of vacations that generally include the phrase, "may leave after the student's last commitment." In planning for those travel dates, please note that commitments include games on Long Weekends and exams at the relevant times. We cannot change exams to accommodate travel needs, so please check with your student's advisor if you have any questions. ***Please be sure to plan for travel to take place prior to the closing of the dorms; we cannot accommodate students prior to or after the dates on which dorms open or close.***

What does campus look and feel like in the evenings? As a residential school, our focus is on the safety and well-being of our students. Adults live on campus and are present throughout the day and night in all buildings. Adults have a variety of evening duties, which include:

- "Faculty in charge" ("FICs") duty, which involves faculty members in a rotation of specified meal and campus coverage, during which one faculty member each day is available via special cell phone on campus to support the Health Center or other faculty in case of emergencies (e.g., post-practice or game trips to the emergency room);
- "Administrator on Duty" or "AOD," for which the administrator-of-the-day carries a different cell phone for the same reasons and acts as back up for the FIC and for all on-duty faculty;
- *Dorm faculty* in each dorm informally throughout the day and formally from late afternoon through the dorm settling in for the evening (usually 11-11:30pm, but later on Saturdays);
- *Faculty on duty* in Eliot Hall (proctored study hall) and the Library (again, study hall), the Rachel Carson Center and the Tech Center from 7-10:30pm;
- *Faculty "roamers,"* who walk around campus and through buildings from 7pm through 10:45pm, making sure that campus is secure and all is well;
- *Non-faculty evening security guards* who patrol campus from 6pm to 6am; they alarm all of the dorms between 10:30pm and 11:00pm and disable the alarms in the morning.

In the winter, because all athletics except skiing move indoors, practice schedules require substantial alteration of students' schedules (with the exception of dance and wrestling, which have dedicated facilities enabling a regular practice schedule). When students are scheduled for evening practices, they are required to attend proctored afternoon study halls, held in the Library, to compensate for missed study time. In addition, the game schedule fluctuates from the fall-spring Wednesday-Saturday standard, adding further complexity to the students' schedules.

The School's front (south) gate on Lowell Road is chained and locked by 11pm in the evenings; the back gate is secured at about the same time, and can be activated using any community member's prox card. There is a call box at the back gate for after-hours access by visitors who do not have prox cards.

On Saturdays and Sundays, the FICs are responsible for monitoring all events, including meals, and all dorms have at least one faculty member on duty over the weekend. Students know who is on duty via MOODLE and email announcements.

The rules are clear and students are continually educated for and reminded about respect for campus access, locked spaces, and compliance with requests for faculty members and from the security guards regarding appropriate conduct and safety.

For student pick-ups after dark, parents are welcome to pick up students in front of Eliot Hall or Ware Hall. Day student drivers are expected to leave their cars in the “Acorn Lot” located along the north drive.

Moving in, moving out, and storage: The Deans of Students organize the fall orientation programs and return-to-campus, and information on dates and times is sent to families in early August. We request that all families respect the dates and times articulated, as we are not able to take responsibility or provide access otherwise.

While most boarding students live in single rooms, all students will live with roommates for at least one year at Middlesex. Room assignments can change right up until the last minute, so room assignments are available to students at the time of arrival in the fall. Our dormitories are idiosyncratic, and floor plans are not available. ***We urge students and parents to bring less, rather than more, gear to school, and to leave valuables at home.*** All students have an individual in-room safe in which to keep travel documents, electronics, etc. while on campus.

Students are responsible for keeping rooms clean and up to dorm standards, and Heads of Houses require weekly room inspections to enforce those standards. Prior to long breaks, there are more intensive dorm clean-ups. At the end of the year, storage will be available to students who are returning (not for graduating seniors), but students are responsible for packing and working with the Deans of Students to sign up and meet deadlines. There is an additional fee associated with storage, which is off-campus. Parents will be notified via *The POND* of these opportunities and should help their students plan ahead. *Unfortunately, faculty members are not able to store student belongings in their homes over vacations.*

### **Parent attendance at school events: the insider’s guide**

It is always great to see parents at performances and games. Understanding that our students hail from all over the country and from around the world, here are some general summaries of campus events of interest to parents (*more information comes at the right time via mail and the POND*):

Parents’ Weekend: the vast majority of parents come to campus for these two days in late October, which are designed for parents to meet their student’s friends, other parents, and faculty members. This event is designed to bring parents into the student’s experience; it is not a time to focus on grades. On Friday starting at 3pm, there are college counseling presentations for freshman and sophomore parents and third team games. On Friday evening, there are on-campus receptions, by class, for parents and students, followed by an all-school dinner with speakers and music performances. On Saturday, parents can attend shortened classes, meet with advisors, and attend varsity and junior varsity games. After their last commitment on Saturday, students are free to spend the rest of the weekend with their parents. There is no class on Monday to allow families to spend more time together.

St. George’s Days: St. George’s School is our traditional rival, and we play all of our games against St. George’s on the final day of each athletic season. The location of these games

alternates between Middlesex and St. George's. These days are fun, usually accompanied by post-games teas, and are a nice social opportunity for parents.

Plays and recitals: Throughout the year, there are several performances at which parents, families, and guests are most welcome. At the end of the fall (on the evening of St. George's Day games), the main stage fall play is performed for two evenings; the Friday performance is for faculty, staff, and students, and the Saturday performance is for parents, families, and guests. Likewise in the spring, the musical is up for two or sometimes three evenings, with the second (and third) evening open to parents, families, guests, and the public. The winter Dance Concert, in late February, is a lovely evening for parents, and throughout the year there are many performances and music recitals at which parents are most welcome. These events appear on the on-line calendar and in the POND.

Assemblies and Awards: With the exception of Prize Day at graduation, unless these events appear in the POND as parent-friendly events, our Academic or Athletics Awards assemblies are designed for students/faculty/staff attendance. These events occur during the bustle of the school day and our seating for them does not accommodate guests.

Athletic contests: Throughout the year, attending games is great fun for our entire community. ***As a member school of the Independent School League, we place great emphasis on sportsmanship for both the participants and the spectators. We want our sidelines to be places of positive reinforcement – cheering for, not against, our opponents, and fully in support of the players, coaches, and referees involved in the contest.*** Parents are most welcome at games, and we look to our parents to make sure that conversation and conduct on the sidelines is positive, constructive, and mature, in addition to enthusiastic.

Senior chapels: Each year, many seniors decide to give all-school talks in our weekly Wednesday morning chapels. While these talks are sometimes, but certainly not always, attended by the speaker's parents, other parents do not attend.

Holiday Concert: On the first weekend in December, the Music Department puts on the annual Holiday Concert. This event involves more than 100 student musicians and is quite a celebration for the school. The Saturday performance is for students, faculty, and staff, and is followed by our Holiday Dinner; the Sunday performance is open to parents and to the community, and is followed by the Holiday Concert Tea, hosted by the Middlesex Parents' Association, at which we honor the performers.

Senior Prom: Each spring, our Student Activities Committee organizes a Prom for our seniors. Seniors can invite an outside date or underclass date, or they can go as groups of friends. At about 5:00pm on the afternoon of the prom, our community – students, faculty, staff, and parents (both senior parents and other parents) – gathers informally to take a lot of pictures, enjoy the moment with the class, and provide lots of adult support for a positive send-off. After the prom and the post-prom Senior Breakfast in the Terry Room on campus – one of the truly great events of the year that the Parents' Association sponsors – boarders return to their dorms, and day students are picked up by their parents, as no one is allowed to drive to the prom or home from the prom. *We respectfully request that parents refrain from providing further opportunities to celebrate – with a Saturday full of games, getting ready, photos, the prom, and the post-prom breakfast, students are very tired and have had a safe, great day.*

*PLEASE NOTE: There is an additional charge to attend Prom, and the current student culture is (unless otherwise arranged by the students) to expect each attendee to pay his or her own way. This charge appears on student bills.*

Prize Day and Graduation: Usually held on the Sunday following Memorial Day in the spring, graduation events begin on Saturday afternoon with the Senior Parent Tea, Senior Recital and Art Show, Prize Day (all academic prizes for the year), and the Baccalaureate dinner and service. On Sunday, graduation begins at 11am (outdoors, weather permitting), lasts about an hour, and closes with the Faculty handshaking line and lunch for everyone in the Atkins Center. Parents of underclassmen are welcome to attend everything but the Baccalaureate dinner and service, which due to space limitations in the Chapel is for faculty, staff, seniors and their guests.

Other significant student events include **Random Dance, Casino Night, Green Rooms, Freedom of Speech, Spring Fling, Spring Carnival.**

Just a word on **Casino Night**, probably the most highly-anticipated event of the year. The student etiquette is that if one is asked by someone, one agrees to attend with that person in a platonic way (this is not a romantically-linked couples event!). While most students seem to enjoy the drama of asking and being asked, students should also feel free to attend with groups of friends. And while the students love to dress up, tuxes and formal dresses are not required, nor are flowers or other formal dance conventions. The evening is a structured social evening with a dinner, games (staffed by faculty members), and a swing dance for which lessons are held in advance to those who choose to participate. There is no charge for attending Casino Night, and the weekend is considered a “closed” weekend to encourage everyone to participate.

## Absences and Special Excuses

We place a premium on attendance in class and for all required activities, and we strongly urge students to attend as many non-required activities as time and interest allow. Becoming fully invested in the community is important in many ways, both in terms of a student's comfort and happiness at school and in terms of how other students and faculty members perceive that student's investment in others. The school routinely honors those who give of themselves to others, and those students as seniors find themselves growing into leadership positions that reflect their investment in the school activities and in their peers. Therefore, we have a series of required community events in the evenings and on weekends to support student investment and engagement in the community. These requirements include some evening meetings and chapels and some "closed weekends" during which all boarders will stay in the dorms and all day students should plan to attend the events.

Many students juggle the demands of school life and serious outside interests. Outside interests can be a refreshing change from school life; however, they can also take students away from campus and peers and result in students' missing opportunities to connect with other students on campus. Sometimes students who spend significant amounts of time away from campus find their absence reflected in a lower on-campus profile and less connection with peers and the community. Obviously these students, in the best situations, develop a good balance and an understanding of how pursuing their goals away from school affects their relationships with the school community.

While the school schedule is as it is to support student well-being and achievement, we will try to work with students on those extraordinary demands as follows:

- 1) Club athletics, music commitments, or other weekly commitments outside of school: All requests for special permissions (to miss class or other required school events) must go through the Deans' Office in advance of the commitments. Students will be asked to submit an explanation of the request and a plan/schedule for the requested absences. The Assistant Head, Dean of Students, Athletic Director, and Director of Arts meet to review the requests in light of the student's academic performance and citizenship. In general, if a student is doing well academically and is meeting all school expectations regarding attendance, behavior, and conduct, that student can qualify for one or two evenings per week of being late to study hours to accommodate the interest. We urge students and parents to focus on appropriate summer opportunities rather than opportunities during the school year.
- 2) Tournaments, performances, etc: Sometimes our students are involved in regional or national-level events to which they are invited by virtue of outstanding performance. In advance of such an event, requests for special permissions during the week must go through the Deans' Office in advance of the commitments. The Assistant Head, Dean of Students, Athletic Director, and Director of Arts meet to review the requests in light of the student's academic performance and citizenship. In general, if a student is doing well academically and as a school citizen, that student can qualify for such events; however, the student is responsible for making up the work missed without special tutoring or support from teachers.
- 3) Special absences: once-in-a-lifetime events such as religious events, weddings, graduations, funerals, etc. are part of all of our lives, and students will pursue special permissions from the Deans of Students for such events. If at all possible, please do not schedule the following while school (classes/practices/activities) is in session:
  - Retreats or extended periods of off-campus religious instruction
  - Community service or other extended trips
  - Routine medical and dental appointments (emergencies happen, of course!)
  - Family vacations (**please do not extend the School's vacation schedule**)

- 4) Study away from school during the school year: Middlesex encourages its students to take advantage of the relatively short time at Middlesex and to reserve alternative educational programs and study abroad for vacations and for later college years, when students are better equipped to be safe and take full advantage of such trips at “legal” ages for travel and cultural activities while visiting foreign countries. As a routine matter, we do not grant credit for study abroad programs, nor do we permit students to remain enrolled at Middlesex if they choose to pursue such options outside of school. Questions can be directed to the Assistant Head.

### **The Role of Health and Counseling**

The Handbook outlines the role of the Health Center staff and the resources available to all students, day and boarding, through our Health Center. Included in those resources are a school physician, nurse practitioner, counselor, nutritionist, and other specialists who can help support students. Parents who have any questions or concerns should feel free to contact our Director of Counseling at (978) 371-6505 or our Director of the Health Center at (978) 371-6582. Here are some further notes of special interest to parents:

- 1) Prescription medication and the Health Center: Parents need to work closely to help students manage prescription medication at school, and for the safety and well-being of all students, we need parents’ full support. If your child takes short-term or long-term prescription medication, please be in touch with the Health Center staff at (978) 371-6582 to discuss your child’s needs.
- 2) Illness, missing class, and making up work: Middlesex students achieve highly for a number of reasons, one of which is the amount of time we spend in class and the pace at which academic life moves. We place a premium on 100% attendance, and our teachers cannot take responsibility for students who miss classes for reasons other than poor health. If a boarding student is ill, he or she goes to the Health Center, and the Health Center staff will help the student navigate the day and the day’s responsibilities. If a day student is sick, parents should call the Deans’ Office to report the absence. We have policies for serious illnesses and injuries that are administered by the Health Center and the Academic Office; please call the Director of the Health Center with questions. These policies are fully outlined in our Handbook.
- 3) Role of family physician: While we work closely with physicians and medical specialists, as we are responsible for students when they are on campus, athletic clearance cannot come remotely through pediatricians or primary care physicians. Our Health Staff works closely and confidentially with our students’ health care providers, and when necessary we will request direct conversations to ensure our understanding of students’ needs.
- 4) International students’ health and wellness: From jet-lag to changes in new food choices to other personal issues, sometimes international students face special challenges to their health and wellness. We urge international parents to support their students’ early connection with the health and wellness staff to offer their support.
- 5) Questions about health and well-being: If a parent has misgivings that “something is just not right,” please call the Director of the Health Center or the Director of Counseling. Both of these professionals can provide multiple kinds of support for students (and for parents).

## Status (day or boarding) Changes

As a small school with a relatively inflexible number of beds, we do not have the routine ability to accommodate change-in-status relationships from day to boarding or vice versa. As stated in the Handbook, status changes boarding-to-day are only made for prolonged illness, family crisis, or other serious change of circumstances. Requests for status change should be made to the Dean of Students with the understanding that the request should be accompanied by significant medical or psychological documentation supporting the request. Status change requests from day-to-boarding should also originate with the Dean of Students, with such requests being made prior to February 15<sup>th</sup> for the upcoming school year. Such requests will only be considered in the face of a serious change of circumstances.

## Inside the Discipline Process

While the discipline process is outlined in the Handbook, here are some elements of the process that can add some insight into how it works:

- 1) Immediate discipline responses: There are some rules violations that do not require the Discipline Committee to meet and instead have a standard discipline response that is administered by the Deans and communicated to parents by the advisor. Those situations are articulated in the Handbook.
- 2) Communication during the discipline process: once the discipline process has begun – usually with a “bust” or students caught breaking rules, or with a Deans meeting – the advisor is the medium of communication for parents. **The Dean of Students cannot comment on or discuss with parents an on-going discipline situation, but the advisor is available for support.**
- 3) Timeline and deliberations: Our Discipline Committee consists of four faculty members and three students; add in the two Deans and the student(s) and advisor(s) involved, and it can take some time to organize the meeting. While we work with all due speed, we don’t rush discipline conversations, and it is usual for the Discipline Committee to meet more than once prior to making a recommendation to the Head of School, who may need additional time for deliberations and further conversation, as well. We realize that the passing of time is difficult in these circumstances and avoid unnecessary delays, while making sure we are thorough and fair.
- 4) Re-entry and probation: Following a discipline event that involves a separation from school, students meet, with their advisors, with the Deans. Probation and school warning are standard discipline responses, and while it is important for students to understand and absolutely respect probationary status, it is also important to understand that the faculty is not on alert, in any special way, to scrutinize students for further errors.
- 5) Long-term ramifications and reporting to colleges: The majority of colleges request that applicants and sending schools complete discipline statements, and our policy is clearly outlined in the Handbook. Our college counselors work with students to craft honest and appropriate statements (separate from the rest of the application materials) and proceed with a shared understanding of the situation. In most situations, we find that colleges respect our discipline process and acknowledge evidence that a student has learned from the mistake.

Seniors who are involved in discipline situations are required to report their change of status during the application process, and they are supported as above. Colleges sometimes take serious

notice of these senior-year problems. For many reasons, including their leadership positions and status in the community, seniors need to be very careful of the choices they make.

- 6) Effects of discipline on a student's transcript: The Middlesex transcript bears no record of a student's discipline record. In the case of a dismissal, or of a withdrawal for non-disciplinary reasons, the transcript states "Did Not Complete" with an appropriate date.

### **Middlesex Parents' Association**

All parents are invited to join the Middlesex Parents' Association ("MPA"). This great volunteer organization organizes the energies of parents throughout the world in support of student experience and the School. The MPA has a board of officers and managers for specific undertakings, and conducts on-campus meetings during the course of the school year that are webcast for parents around the world. Parents receive information about the MPA by summer communications and via The POND; the organizational chart also appears in the school Directory, with contact information for volunteer coordinators and officers. Video recordings of MPA meetings, as well as an archive of past PONDS, can be found under the "Parents" tab on the school website. Questions about the MPA can be directed to [mpa@mxschool.edu](mailto:mpa@mxschool.edu).

### **The Lifecycle of a Middlesex Student**

In an attempt to provide a very succinct overview of a student's time at Middlesex, we hope you find the following summaries helpful:

Course placement, advisors, and dorm placement: All new students complete course placement materials that are used to create appropriate academic programs. Because we schedule math and modern language by the semester, rather than by the full year, the rest of students' courses are affected and student schedules are therefore rather unique, with significant changes at the semester break as math and language progression dictates other schedule changes. Courses such as English and later, history are designed such that students can move seamlessly from one teacher to another on a semester basis. Faculty seek to help students achieve the right balance of challenge and potential achievement in selecting courses, and the Academic and the College Counselors review all course selection, for all students, to make sure that students enroll (from the start) in courseloads that are advantageous to them throughout their time at Middlesex and during the college application process, as well. While we appreciate and understand the appeal of an ambitious course load, please keep in mind that there is a point where an overly intensive schedule becomes disadvantageous, and that our in-depth understanding of each course's unique demands helps us steer a student's schedule towards a healthy balance, academic and otherwise.

The Admissions staff and Deans of Students faculty assign advisors based on a student's expressed interests and the teachers, coaches, and dorm faculty most likely to have significant interactions with the student. At the end of the first semester, new students are able to change advisors, and all students are asked to confirm advisor choices at the end of each year.

While the college counselors maintain a low profile during a student's freshman and sophomore year, they are actively engaged in monitoring course selection, appropriate standardized testing opportunities, and community standing. During the junior and senior years, the college counselors become almost adjunct advisors for students.

Every year, the Deans of Students assign housing based on self-descriptions and expressed preferences but makes no promises about being able to honor specific requests. While the majority of our dorm rooms are singles, boarding students should expect to have a roommate at least one year on campus.

New students participate in extensive orientations that include academic, community life and diversity, athletic, and library sessions.

Class IV, the freshman year: Roughly 75% of the class comes in as freshmen. During this year, students carry 5 courses plus one of the half-credit arts courses; they participate in three seasons of formal athletics; they participate in the Choices program that sets the foundation for expectations for community life. Students spend a lot of time and energy “building their nests” at school, learning about 500+ new people, new school systems, new expectations, and high school life in general. Boarders spend energy learning to live away from home, and all students emerge from childhood into the demands adolescence makes. All freshmen are “in” for the night at 7:30pm. We strongly urge freshman day students to leave campus at 7:30pm; if they must remain on campus, they must sign in to the Library study hall until 9:30pm and be picked up directly at 9:30pm. Freshmen who are involved in evening play rehearsals will go over the schedule with the play’s director. On campus, study hours run from 7:30-9:30pm, with “free time” in the dorm between 9:30-10:30pm, with lights out at 10:30pm (unless special permission to do an unusual amount of homework has been granted, known as “late lights”). Freshman are expected to spend most weekends (*i.e.*, Saturday night into Sunday morning) on campus, with a “flexible spending account” of weekends to be away from campus. Weekend permissions are further defined in the Handbook, and are graduated based on student’s years.

All freshmen receive the Middlesex planner, which is customized to help students manage and organize not only their homework but also their overall commitments. In classes, teachers go over how to use the planner and how to use MOODLE, our intra-school on-line system for managing course work and other school commitments. For some students, coming to class with everything he or she needs can be a challenge, at first, and teachers spend time over the course of the year working with freshmen through the series of “firsts” – first set of Middlesex grades (which can be lower than they had been in middle school); first paper, first test, first set of exams, etc. Teachers encourage students to meet to go over work or just to talk, and advisors reinforce expectations and encourage students as needed. While some students come in prepared for the pace and expectations, others take longer to adjust. Again, advisors play a key role in communicating with teachers and supporting students as needed with the transition into high school.

Over the course of the six-day schedule, each class does not meet every day, and each student’s homework load varies by his or her schedule. Students can count on at least one “free” period each day, in addition to lunch; however, students can also count on having more than two hours of homework and needing to find some time besides formal study hours to do work. Free periods during the day are managed by the student, and the school expects students to use those free periods as needed – for doing extra homework or studying or meeting with teachers for extra help, or for relaxing with friends when possible. Teachers expect students to make appointments with teachers for extra help during those free periods; while all teachers have classrooms, teachers’ schedules vary, and appointments in advance are the best way to ensure getting together.

All students are encouraged, but not required, to get to breakfast, lunch, and dinner during the published hours, and the Dining Hall is open for snacks (bagels and fruit and sometimes more) between meals up until the half-hour prior to the next meal’s opening.

Freshmen spend a significant amount of energy meeting people, building relationships, and settling in to comfort on campus; usually those first semester grades reflect the transition to high school and the energy

spent “building the nest” here. While there are a few traditions, such as where not to sit in the Dining Hall (on the Senior Stage) and in chapel (in the balcony), ages of students mix across classes, arts and athletics, and dorm life, and freshmen develop a range of friends. Advisors will encourage students to become involved in areas of interest as soon as possible, whether those interests are captured by a club or student organization currently in existence or whether the student will need to think about how to work to develop those interests otherwise.

Class III, the sophomore year: The Class III year is the busiest year academically, as students take 5 courses plus the half-credit arts course AND the Writing Workshop, our signature writing program that requires, by winter, students to demonstrate proficiency in grammar, usage, and composition in order to graduate from the course (those who do not graduate actually continue on with the course during the junior year). Some students petition for an additional course, usually a second language or full-credit arts course; some opt to take the preparation course for the Advanced Placement World History exam. In any case, sophomores have the fewest “free” periods during the week. Sophomores are involved in the Connections program, an extension of Freshmen Choices, and have all of the work that goes with transitioning into a new school. A special sophomore class orientation that occurs within the first week of school brings the class together and sets the tone for the year.

Sophomores are involved in three seasons of formal athletics, and in addition to any co-curricular theater work, all sophomores take the introductory theater class and perform student-written scenes in the “Green Rooms,” which are a rite of passage attended by much of the student body (but not for parents). Sophomores begin the year by being “in for the night” at 7:30pm along with the freshmen, but as the second semester begins, sophomores are allowed to be out of the dorm from 9:30-10:00pm at the Grill or at another approved campus location. Sophomore day students can sign in to the library for study hall and join their boarding classmates from 9:30-10:00pm, but must leave campus promptly by 10:00pm. During the week prior to Thanksgiving, the sophomores do a week of drug and alcohol education with staff from the organization Freedom from Chemical Dependency (“FCD”).

Again, new sophomores spend a significant amount of energy meeting people, building relationships, and settling in to comfort on campus; usually those first semester grades reflect those efforts. For everyone, though, sophomore year is a busy, challenging year, as students manage the largest number of commitments without the shelter of being the youngest on campus. Advisors will continue to encourage students to become involved in areas of interest as soon as possible, whether those interests are captured by a club or student organization currently in existence or whether the student will need to think about how to work to develop those interests otherwise. The standardized testing program for college kicks in with PSATS in October and SAT IIs in the spring for students whose course work has readied them for those exams (again, students and parents are notified by the College Office if a student should consider taking those exams).

Class II, the junior year: Juniors carry a five-course academic load and can petition to take a 6<sup>th</sup> course, often a senior elective in a field of special interest (roughly 30% of students each semester do so). All students are prepared to take both the English Language and the English Literature Advanced Placement examinations, and many students through course choices are preparing for additional AP work, as well. Juniors have only 2 seasons of formal athletic requirements (although many students choose to remain with three seasons; they can opt for a “recreational fitness” for one season and can also become involved in a service project in lieu of athletics. Many day students drive to campus, parking in the DSP.)

Juniors begin the process of preparing for college applications early. Although Junior Parents’ Weekend in February officially kicks off the process, the College Office helps students prepare for the standardized testing regimen early on; counselors begin individual meetings with juniors in January, taking on discussions of course load as well as other strategies. Many students and parents choose to visit colleges

during March break of the junior year, in order to build an understanding of what “big,” “small,” “urban” and “rural” mean when describing colleges. Some students choose to take part in the SAT prep program we host, which meets throughout the fall. Students take the PSAT in October; the SAT I in December and January; Advanced Placement exams in May; and SAT IIs in May and in June. Some students will also choose to take the ACT exam in June. In individual meetings with college counselors, students will research and develop a college visit list; plan standardized testing schedules; and strategize through all elements of the application process. Parents receive the College Office Handbook in February and receive updates from the college counselors over the course of the spring.

Also in the spring, each junior has a faculty interview in which two faculty members talk with that junior about his or her experience to date, plans for senior year, and ways in which the junior will contribute to the community. These interviews, combined with the self-assessment done for the college process and the self-evaluation done for the leadership process, form the basis for the school’s allocation of leadership posts for the senior year. Students are asked to consider and rank their interest in the variety of positions and faculty members responsible for those areas assess students on the basis of their citizenship, investment in and contribution to the community, and personal fit for positions in question. Those positions are announced in the final weeks of the year. Faculty members meet extensively, attempting to match the students’ interests and strengths with the available leadership positions, making sure that all students are offered at least one leadership position for his/her senior year.

The summer between junior year and senior year is busy, in terms of college visits and interviews and application work. Having received the College Office Handbook in February, parents have a good outline of the work we recommend for the summer.

Class I, the senior year: Seniors return to campus early for a formal leadership orientation program, and all participate in both the initial senior orientation and the bi-weekly leadership meetings held by the Deans of Students. Seniors take a minimum of five courses; many choose to take a sixth or to develop and Independent Study Project (“ISP”) with a faculty member in a particular area of interest. Seniors may take one course on a pass/fail basis as long as that course is not being used to satisfy a graduation requirement and is not an Advanced Placement course. Seniors are only required to participate in one formal athletics season (most do more) and are eligible for service and other projects in lieu of athletics. Seniors are invited to dinner at the Heads House in small groups with faculty members. Seniors also have the most freedom in around campus, with the ability to sign out during the day to go out to lunch, the ability to decide where on campus to work in the evenings, and 10:30pm check-in/campus departure at night. With no limit on the number of weekends students can take, seniors manage considerable independence.

The college application process takes up almost the equivalent of an academic course’s worth of time and focus, as seniors meet with the college counselors and with college representatives who come to campus, work on actual applications, and finish the standardized testing process on the fall test dates in October, November, and December. Students use the fall long weekend to make last minute visits to college campuses. The vast majority of Middlesex seniors take advantage of a variety of early application processes, so the November 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> deadlines are important dates for seniors. News from early applications is available in the middle of December, and whether the news is great or not, there is a significant wave of emotion that runs through this time for seniors, as many students (and many parents) realize that the college discussions are over and the reality of finishing high school and leaving Middlesex – leaving friends and family and childhood – sets in. It is a little difficult to sort out all of the emotions involved in the college application process, but it is usual that by the end of the early phase (end of January), better than 75% of seniors usually have at least one acceptance in hand.

Seniors are engaged in a broad range of leadership responsibilities, from dorm proctors to sports captains to choral officers to editors of publications to club leaders. They spend a lot of time in these activities. Final college applications get filed in January and February, with most of the news arriving throughout March. After March break, seniors are generally pre-occupied with figuring out their college plans, attending re-visits as necessary, Advanced Placement exams, and looking ahead to the “last,” the Prom and graduation. **Seniors are subject to the Senior Spring Rule (please see the Handbook, page 45), which states that a violation of any major school rule results in that senior leaving campus after his or her last obligation and not attending graduation ceremonies.**

Graduation is a wonderful event, with the Prize Day awards ceremony and baccalaureate service the prior evening. On graduation morning, girls wear white dresses and boys wear blue blazers and khaki pants as they process across from the Chapel across the Circle to Eliot Hall. Following the awarding of diplomas, graduates and faculty exchange thanks and congratulations in the handshaking line, and then seniors are congratulated by the rest of the school. Most seniors are ready to leave and ready to move forward, and it is a joyful, if poignant, goodbye.

### Academic notes

Please refer to the Handbook and Curriculum Guide for rules and regulations, but here are some additional and hopefully helpful notes for parents:

Grades and expectations: Middlesex teachers make use of the full grading spectrum, and students in general find that teachers’ expectations are high and grading is rigorous. Also, as students transition into high school, with talented peers of all ages from all over the world, the level of discussion, work, and expectation reflect the talent and commitment of an outstanding peer group. It can take some time to adjust to increased expectations, and advisors are excellent sources of support and information with regards to questions about grades and achievement. We expect our students to manage independently materials, assignments, and attendance.

Attendance: Please note our expectations and rules regarding class attendance as expressed in our Handbook (pages 16-17, 38). **Specifically, please note our “80%” rule that requires a student’s physical attendance at at least 80% of class meetings in order to be eligible to receive credit for any course.** Also, please note that repeated tardies can create attendance, credit, and finally discipline consequences. Questions can be directed to our Dean of Students or Assistant Head.

Extra help and tutoring: We expect all of our students to develop the habit of seeking extra help from their teachers, both as a way to improve their understandings and as a way to develop important relationships. Teachers work with students on an appointment basis during mutual free periods during the day and also in the evenings, when the teachers’ schedules allow. Seeking extra help from one’s teacher is the first step in addressing academic difficulties. Peer tutors are also available during L-blocks and on a nightly basis in the library to support quick questions and help with homework problems.

If a student requires additional support after taking advantage of that extra help, the student’s advisor and the Academic Support Coordinator will work with the student and family to find additional support.

Recently, we are finding that some students and families arrange for on-line or Skype tutoring sessions with tutors unconnected with the School. Many students seem to become very reliant on these tutors as homework coaches, and the students then struggle to reproduce the skills they are supposed to be mastering. We urge all families to discuss any tutoring arrangements with advisors and with our Academic Office.

Course selection: Advisors work with advisees on course selection in the spring (and for older students, again in January) and seek to help students achieve the right balance of challenge and potential achievement in selecting courses, and the Academic Office and the College Counselors review all course selection, for all students, to make sure that students enroll (from the start) in course loads that are advantageous to them throughout their time at Middlesex and during the college application process, as well. College counselors keep a low profile in students' freshmen and sophomore years but maintain a watch on course load and standardized testing.

Restricted assessment weeks: For the weeks prior to vacations or exams, our academic calendar goes into "restricted assessment" mode, in which assessments are limited to one test or paper each day in a specific class "block" in addition to regular daily homework assignments. (Normally, we do not allow more than three major assessments on any given day, and students with more can work through the scheduling conflicts with the teachers and Director of Studies). Classes with regular homework continue to meet during restricted assessment weeks.

Exams (cumulative (December) and final (spring)): There are two formal exam periods during the year. We set aside groups of days for exam periods, during which classes do not meet. Exam periods are preceded by review days (2) and a reading day, and most teachers hold additional review sessions prior to exams, as well. The first exam period, in December, comes prior to the winter break and also prior to the end of the first semester; those exams are referred to as cumulative to date, rather than as semester exams. In the spring, the final exam period covers the entire semester. Cumulative and final exams carry significant weight for students' semester averages.

Semester grades and comments as the record: Please note that while there are four marking periods per year (loosely called "quarters," although they are not calendared to divide the semesters evenly), only semester grades and comments are part of students' permanent academic records.

### **Athletics Notes**

Athletics requirements and policies are outlined in the Handbook and communicated to students in mail, email, and conversation. Here are some further notes for parents:

Equipment: Students are required to purchase basic "issue" (T shirt, shorts, socks) when they arrive, and they are expected to wear issue to practice. With the exception of crew shells and oars, helmets, and ice hockey pants, students provide their own additional equipment – sneakers, cleats, skates, racquets, skis, gloves, etc. The school launders T shirts, shorts, and socks for practices and uniforms for games.

Gear: While we try to keep extras (particularly *expensive* extras) to a minimum, students enjoy organizing and purchasing special team gear such as sweatshirts and jackets outside of the school. Parents, however, can be understandably upset as extra charges for T shirts or jackets, etc., add up. Please note that participation in these efforts is not required and please communicate directly with your son or daughter as to your willingness to fund such gear. If a varsity team wins a league or New England championship, the school provides a commemorative jacket to all players. *Please contact the Athletic Office if you have any questions and always before beginning to organize such efforts!*

Try-outs: Students are placed on athletic teams by ability, rather than by age, and there are try-outs at the beginning of each season for varsity teams. These try-outs generally take place during the first two or three days of the season – at the beginning of school in the fall, and then the week before Thanksgiving and the week prior to March break. A student can choose not to try out for a varsity team, if the lesser commitment and competitiveness of a junior varsity or third team suits the student's needs best. While there are always disappointments in try-out situations, our coaches will try to communicate fairly, clearly,

and respectfully with students as we strive for appropriate placements for everyone. Students who miss try-outs because of illness, injury, or conflicting athletic requirements (e.g., post-season tournaments overlapping with next-season try-outs) will have the opportunity to try-out for the next season at the appropriate time.

General athletics schedule: Students are engaged in athletics Monday-Friday from 3:35-5:35pm, and often on Saturdays with games and practices, as well. In the winter, because of the need to hold multiple team practices in our indoor facilities, the practice schedule runs from 3:20 to 10:00pm. Students who have an evening practice are required to attend proctored afternoon study halls. In the winter, there are no practices between 6:30-7:30pm to ensure that all students can get to dinner and to allow some common evening time for music rehearsals.

In the winter, the ski team competes off campus at a local hill, and in the spring, the track, golf, and crew teams practice and compete at off-campus facilities.

Parents should refer to the website for the current athletic schedule and for directions to opponents' facilities.

Athletic travel: Students are expected to travel to games with the team on the bus, and in general, coaches prefer that students return to school after games on the bus, as well. Students are not allowed to drive themselves to athletic events.

Transitions between seasons: In general, practices for the next athletic season begin on the Wednesday or Thursday following the conclusion of the previous season (varsity athletes are required to take 3 days off). If the team is involved in post-season tournament play, the team continues to practice the week following the St. George's games to prepare for tournament games on the Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday of that week. Students involved in tournament play must take the three days off between seasons but are not penalized for missing the next season's try-outs.

Students do need to plan ahead to make sure that they have the equipment they need for the start of the next athletic season. In general, there are two or three days of winter sports practice prior to Thanksgiving break, and another two or three days of spring sports practice prior to the March break.

Tournaments and vacations: Given the vagaries of any given calendar year, post-season and holiday tournaments can require students' presence at school for the first day or two of the Thanksgiving or December vacations. The school will handle supervision and food, but parents must make any changes to travel arrangements. Given the nature and timing of these tournaments, the information is sometimes unavoidably last-minute.

Life on the sidelines as a parent: **We need your help in making sure that our children have good athletic experiences in the only way that parents can support that goal – through our own behavior as spectators, supporters, and encouragers.** As parents, we sometimes tend to focus on the moment – the missed pass, the minutes played, the shot that went wide, the ref's missed call. Given our emotional investment in our children, as well as the Jumbotron culture of craziness at professional sporting events, we sometimes overstep the boundaries of our children's experience and want/need/take part in it for ourselves. Stepping back, we can all see that for our children to get what we truly want for them in the big picture – resiliency, problem-solving, camaraderie, leadership, grace under pressure, poise, confidence, courage – we need to allow them to do the work of learning and growing. In students' lives, practice and competition are great sources of experiential learning. But to learn from the experience, a child has to have the experience and own the experience. As parents, all we can do is support that goal.

## How best to support? Here are some suggestions and expectations:

- 1) ***Cheer for, not against*** -- for Middlesex, not against other kids. Support positive sideline culture. Please respect where we are asked to stand, as spectators; please lead the League in courtesy and sportsmanship. Our kids often send all-school emails with the phrase, “Keep it classy, Middlesex,” and that’s the ground we want to be ours. A positive sideline culture makes being a spectator and a parent a lot more fun, and we want to be able to come to enjoy our children’s games and being with friends. Positive parent support and sideline behavior makes a huge difference to the success of our program and our students’ experience.
- 2) As the adults in this educational setting, we actually have a responsibility to all of the students competing, not just to Middlesex teams. **In the Independent School League Essential Understandings, ISL schools have agreed to the following principle: “Every school in the league should field teams with confidence that every coach is as concerned with the health and safety of opposing players as with his or her own.”** At Middlesex, we extend that idea to our roles as spectators and assume responsibility for making sure that our competitors experience us as fair, intense, positive fans and athletes.
- 3) **Please support the refs.** Refs are human and make mistakes. In the heat of a game, we want the refs to be kindly disposed towards our kids, and our being supportive and respectful on the sideline can’t but help. We want the refs to like to see Middlesex kids on the field/rink/court, and be glad to work our games.
- 4) **The Independent School League in which we compete is deep and very competitive.** Please remember that your child is no longer competing just in his or her age group, that the athletic talent in the ISL is deep, and that *the age of competitors runs from 12 to 19 years of age*. Students who have been “age-level” stars often find a different experience in high school, particularly early on, and everyone needs to remember the “small fish in the big pond” situation that all students find themselves in as they begin their athletic careers at Middlesex. While it might be natural to be disappointed at not making a varsity team, it is usually the result of coming up against older, bigger, stronger students who have been putting in the time to improve for years. It can be very hard to manage expectations, so please help your student understand context as he or she adjusts.
- 5) **Help your child “own” the experience and communicate with coaches him/herself.** Competitive athletics provides some of the best experiential education opportunities available for our students, and by the time a student reaches ninth grade, it is time to learn to communicate questions and concerns directly. As needed, communicate with your student about his or her communication with his or her coach, recognizing both that our coaches are teachers -- their work in athletics is an extension of their work in the classroom -- and our children are teenagers who may respond to our earnest questions with a quick “I don’t know” or “the coach doesn’t like me” without wanting to get into more complicated discussions. Coaches see students’ everyday play and effort and assess skills and playing time on many factors not seen or experienced by parents. When expectations aren’t met, parents often question children – why aren’t you playing more? What did you do wrong? Often children know answers but don’t share them for fear of disappointing parents; maybe he skipped a practice, or she hasn’t been working hard, or maybe she has finally reached a team where everyone is really good and she is no longer the star. Sometimes it is simply that the student is now playing at a higher, more intense level and needs time to adjust and grow. *Help your child become an able and mature communicator – a most important life skill -- and let him or*

*her do the work of navigating the challenges and handling the relationships with coaches and teammates.* The skills of self-advocacy, processing feedback, managing disappointment, and exercising resiliency and grit are critical skills for young people to learn.

- 6) **Please model respectful behavior towards our coaches.** Again, Middlesex coaches are teachers; we see athletics in the educational context, as fantastic co-curricular opportunities to learn and grow as mature people and as leaders, as well as to enjoy physical activity, competition, and teamwork. Our teachers want to support students' growth both in the short and in the long-terms. This focus takes most of their energy, as does building positive team culture. And athletics is only one part of our students' lives; our teachers' schedules are full of other events and commitments, as well. Occasional team events are held at the coaches' discretion and need to fit within the dynamic and the time demands placed on students and faculty by the Middlesex schedule. *We do not expect Middlesex coaches to debrief or meet with parents after games, when the coaches' attention is focused on debriefing the experience with students, nor do we expect coaches to attend after-game events.*

If there is a pressing need for you as a parent to communicate with a coach on an issue that cannot be resolved directly between coach and student, please discuss the situation with your child's advisor. If it cannot be resolved through that conversation, please email the coach to find a time for a conversation. If there remains a serious unresolved problem, please call either our Dean of Athletics Joe Lang, at (978) 318-1028, or Director of Athletics Ken Risley at (978) 371-6560.

### Arts Notes

General open opportunities (chapel chorus) versus auditions (plays, one acts, and small choruses; SWAG): Students receive information about audition opportunities via email and via announcements at assembly. Auditions are held early in the year for the choruses and then intermittently as theater opportunities arise. While auditions are always stressful, our faculty members will communicate with students fairly, clearly, and respectfully about being cast or not cast or selected or not selected. We ask parents to respect the work of our faculty in this area and help students brook whatever disappointments they might feel.

General notes on concerts and play attendance: Students are delighted to be supported by parents' attending performances. Please note that for space capacity reasons, some performances will be marked for "school" only, meaning students, faculty and staff; we would appreciate parents' attending the performances not designated "school only."

Schedule for music and drama practices: practices for musical groups and for the plays takes place in the evening and is highly choreographed to make the most efficient use of students' time. Students involved in these areas will receive those schedules from faculty; please be advised that there will be times when rehearsals might be scheduled on short notice.

Music lessons: Middlesex students make great use of the huge range of talented adjunct faculty who come to campus to offer private lessons. There is an additional charge for private music lessons. The Music Department sends out information to parents at the beginning of the year and makes several community announcements over the course of the year regarding private music lessons. Students can begin music lessons at the beginning of each semester and can, but are not required to, participate in a number of recitals held throughout the school year.

Co-curricular studio opportunities: Throughout the school year, there are a series of Open Studios and Middlesex Arts Association events, and the Pottery Club meets weekly for students who are interested. Students who have serious interest in studio art but who are not currently enrolled in studio courses can access the studios by working directly with an arts faculty member.

Anvil and Iris: The *Anvil* (the student newspaper) and the *Iris* (the student arts magazine) are published throughout the year. Each organization has faculty advisors in addition to student leaders, and all students are encouraged to submit writing, photos, and art work to these publications.

Displays of student work: student artwork appears around campus, especially in our new Music and Campus Center and in the lobby of Ware Hall. In the spring, the AP Studio art class holds a gala opening event during the week before graduation to which parents are welcome.

### **Student Recognition**

Our bi-weekly assemblies are constant open forums for student recognition, and all members of the school community are invited to make announcements or send emails that celebrate the achievement of community members.

Twice each year, during the school day, the School comes together for the formal **Academic Awards assemblies**, during which a faculty member speaks briefly about his or her own insights and experiences as a student and teacher. Students are honored by certificates in their mailboxes for honors (an overall average between 85-89), and students who achieve high honors (an average of 90 or higher) receive small silver bowls on which their names and dates of high honors are engraved. The current high honors recipients' bowls are displayed in the library for the semester following the achievement of high honors, and upon graduation, students can take their silver bowls with them. These assemblies are also forums in which National Merit, Advanced Placement, and other forms of student recognition are publicly acknowledged.

After each athletic season, we honor student participants during **Athletic Awards assemblies** at which varsity captains and coaches offer recaps of seasons, and students receive any all-league or other kinds of recognition. There are school-based awards, by sport, that are either voted by teams or awarded by coaches at these assemblies. Due to space limitations, only students and faculty are invited to the Academic and Athletic Awards assemblies.

The day before graduation, we celebrate all other student awards at our **Prize Day ceremony**. As the ceremony is part of graduation weekend, all senior parents are invited as part of those festivities. All students are required to attend. The school has a number of prizes that are awarded annually by departments to honor outstanding academic and student performances; additionally, the school honors achievement and performance in athletics, arts, leadership, citizenship, service, and community contribution.

Although there are no additional prizes awarded at **Graduation**, students who achieve academic honors (students can graduate with credit, with high credit, or with highest credit based on their cumulative (numerical) academic averages) learn of their honors as they graduate. Please refer to the Handbook and the Curriculum Guide for more information on graduating with honors.

Local newspapers are notified of student achievement if parents indicate their preference for such notification and supply information in the opening of school forms. For better or for worse, the Concord Journal only publishes news involving Concord residents, and therefore only selectively covers School events.

## **An Overview of the Community Life Curriculum**

“Class Chapels” take place over the course of the year, usually followed by a short social event, at which we have a variety of speakers addressing themes timely for the students. 9th graders have two class chapels, 10th and 11th graders have one each.

### General programs by grade:

9th grade: Choices (includes a presentation from Campus Outreach Services), Mindfulness, and Dialogues Across Difference  
10th grade: Connections; Campus Outreach Services; Freedom from Chemical Dependency for all; Mindfulness for new 10th graders  
11th grade: Campus Outreach Services; junior interviews and conversations; Mindfulness for new 11th graders  
Seniors: Senior leadership orientation, Senior leadership meetings; Project Impact/Model Mugging for girls

On-going Mindfulness programs are available on a voluntary basis.

In addition, the School meets throughout the year, in a variety of different groupings (by advising group; by house; by grade) led by faculty members, along the following calendar:

September: Senior and new student orientation; honor pledge and acceptable use policy review; hazing, harassment, and bullying review; Community Life meeting by house; All School Read; Community Service Day; Class events

October: Community Life meeting by house – usually dedicated to a School value;

November: Freedom From Chemical Dependency (FCD) - drug and alcohol education for entire school

January: Community Life meeting (by grade or advisor group); Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. day

February: Community Life meeting (by grade) - leadership and engagement

March: Diversity Symposium

April: Junior interviews; Earth Day - sustainability; Day of Silence Observation; senior transition meetings; Community Life by house— peer advice and looking back on the year

May: Class socials; Community Life dinners by house

## **Enrichment opportunities for students**

Over the course of the year, students and parents will receive notice of optional enrichment opportunities, usually including music lessons; Project Impact Model Mugging (senior girls in the spring); pre-season athletics trips; March vacation arts trips; summer language and service trips; Advantage Testing SAT prep courses and tutoring on campus; and drivers’ education on campus. These opportunities are publicized by email and assembly announcements to students and will appear in the POND for parents to note. On a more informal basis, students will receive notice of other enrichment opportunities, such as faculty-sponsored weekend activities, that pop up. For these faculty-sponsored activities, the School will subsidize the cost per student if it exceeds \$20. For all of these opportunities, space is often limited, and students need to respond to the notices they receive quickly.

## A Brief Overview of College Counseling and Standardized Testing

Although parents don't become involved with our college counselors until their students' junior years, here are some notes on frequently asked questions. As noted above, our college counselors watch over course selection for all students and monitor the appropriateness of standardized testing throughout a student's time at Middlesex. Their recommendations get communicated to parents on a timely "FYI" basis as we encourage students to take responsibility for their academic records early on. Our college counselors are happy to answer general questions at any time about the college application process, and can be reached at (978) 371-6533.

In general:

SAT and SAT Subject Tests are offered, on campus, in October, November, December, May, and June  
Advanced Placement exams are offered on campus in early May  
ACT is not offered on campus, but sometimes pursued by juniors and seniors off-campus

Standardized testing calendar and policies: Collegeboard.com is an excellent source of information regarding standardized testing and score options. As colleges vary widely with regard to their requirements for the variety of test scores, our college counselors advise students when (based on students' curricular readiness) to take the different tests; thus students build up a "portfolio" of test scores by taking the tests at optimal times. Our college counselors work with students on an individual basis to establish appropriate test choices and timing for testing; it does not benefit students to take SAT tests constantly and can become counter-productive. Our college counselors communicate with students via email and with parents via regular mail and The POND regarding reminders on the testing calendars.

The standardized testing program is conducted by the College Board and the Educational Testing Service, which charge fees associated with the tests. Registration for the SAT program and for these tests is on-line and requires access to a credit card (fee waivers are available for students who qualify). ***Students are responsible for following College Office directives and reminders about when and how to create their on-line accounts with the College Board.*** While each of our students ends up with a highly individualized standardized test portfolio, we recommend the SAT/ACT/Advanced Placement test calendar generally as follows:

Freshman year: June SAT Subject Tests if students are involved in honors biology, math 32 and 49, and languages above level 32 (above level 3 for Latin and Chinese);

Sophomore year: same as above, including honors chemistry. Students who opt to participate in the *optional* enrichment program for Advanced Placement World History will take that test in June upon completion of the world history class.

Junior Year: All juniors are encouraged to take the SAT test in December and again in March and the SAT Subject Tests in May and in June. All juniors will take the Advanced Placement exams (there are 2) in English; juniors who are taking "AP" designated courses will also be required to take those exams.

Senior Year: Students usually take the SAT in August, then use the October and November test dates to finish up any testing requirements specific to colleges to which they are applying. Seniors who take courses designated "AP" will take those Advanced Placement exams in May.

When should we start visiting colleges? Many families like to use vacation and unrelated travel opportunities to visit colleges and so begin to build students' college-search vocabulary – big, small, urban, rural, etc. To the extent that these visits build a sense of comfort and excitement, rather than a

sense of anxiety, they can be very helpful at any time. During the March break of the junior year and the summer between junior and senior year, students should plan to make more formal visits to colleges, making sure to sign in to admissions office, attend information sessions and campus tours, and sit for interviews where they are offered. While the college counselors provide advice and ultimately assist juniors in generating credentials-appropriate college search lists, families schedule these trips and visits.

Junior year and junior summer work: Juniors work intensively with the college counselors beginning in January, meeting both individually and in groups to begin the college research and application process. Parents are welcomed to campus in February for a Junior Parents' Weekend, which we strongly urge all parents to attend. The three college counselors divide the class for ease of contact and meetings, but the counselors work with the entire class in terms of college planning and representing students to colleges. Based on a student's individualized strengths, credentials, and interests, he or she will work with his or her college counselor to create an appropriately balanced, rich list. Parents can contact their student's college counselor via email or phone mail with questions, and many parents try to set up individual meetings (either in person or on the phone) with the counselor during the junior spring or senior fall. The counselors are in and out of the College Office over the summer as they work to draft school recommendations, organize materials, and take vacation time, so parents should plan ahead with regard to making contacts with the college counselors while school is in session.

The summer between the junior and the senior year should be considered college-prep time, as students come home with individualized, fairly well-defined list of schools across the admissions accessibility spectrum to research and visit, and ultimately at which to begin the application process. Students are well advised to work hard on essays and applications during this time and to make sure that they return to school in the fall with well-balanced college plans. Students will need colleges to which admission (based on their credentials) seems likely, as well as schools that might be more of a "reach," and that work is best done during the junior summer when the student's grades, testing credentials, strengths, and interests are well-established.

Most Middlesex seniors choose to apply to early application programs offered by colleges. These programs vary widely, in terms of colleges' policies, and our students develop individual strategies to combine the programs (as possible) with the student's individual priorities. However, all early application programs require students to be ready to apply and potentially ready to commit by early fall. ***Doing most of the work in the summer sets up students for success in the senior winter and spring.***

Senior year visits: Many students use the fall long weekend or the Sunday-Monday of Parents' Weekend to make final college visits. Seniors may miss one day of class for college visits, so appending that day onto one of these long weekends usually makes the most sense. Early applications are generally due beginning on October 15<sup>th</sup>, with the bulk due in November. As senior year grades are critical, students are again very well served by doing as much writing and work on applications as possible over the summer.