



# The Informal Guide for Parents

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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 will be issued the school **Planner**, an assignment notebook customized to our schedule, calendar, and reference materials. The best place to find updated calendar information is on the website. **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 the IT department at [Helpdesk@mxschool.edu](mailto:Helpdesk@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, and in no way extends or re-states official School policy. 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.*

## Communication Philosophy and Expectations

As we say often, wherever a Middlesex student sleeps at night, they belong 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 students, 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. This growing up 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, they will invest an enormous amount of energy getting to know hundreds of new people and “building a 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; 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. 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 Middlesex 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 they are 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 (if at all) 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 and informal communication occurs fairly constantly, on a casual basis in class, on sidelines, in the Dining Hall, etc. While advisees are welcome to call advisors if they encounter problems at odd times, or at times when a faculty member is not on duty or on campus, we prohibit texts or on-line contact other than email. **Faculty members at Middlesex should not text or “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 Wellness 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 relationships 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 should not text or engage on social media with parents of current students.

## Communication Logistics

Permissions: Student safety is 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 spring Magnus Deans' Enrollment 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. Please attend carefully to those permissions. Additionally, all Heads of House maintain separate "permissions" phone lines for parents to use in inviting and authorizing visits for students to off-campus locations. Please be sure to think carefully about permissions and communicate your decisions to your child. 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, and we hope parents will take some deep breaths and sort through trying moments or communication prior to deciding what steps to take next, if any.

Communication at night and on weekends: Most of our faculty members 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. At 10:00pm, 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 Wellness Center will answer the phone or answer the Wellness 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.

We encourage students to invest in their face-to-face relationships by limiting the use of their cell phones during the day. We ask all members of the community to refrain from cell phone use when in the chapel, theater, dining hall or any classroom. Anyone making or receiving a call should do so from a fixed position outside of a school building.

Most teachers ask students to turn in their cell phones during class and 9th and 10th graders turn in their phones during evening study hours. Please set up times to contact your child that respect the class day and evening study hours.

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, so parents should not worry if four-to-six hours go by before a student returns 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 boarding 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.

While school is in session, the Wellness 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:

### Name Title Primary phone #

Administrator on Duty (978) 760-1906  
Wellness Center On Duty Nurse (978) 371-6583  
Jason Sport, Dean of Students (978) 831-7586  
Kathy Swain, Dean of Students (978) 831-7569  
Bessie Speers, Head of School (978) 831-7426

If there is a general emergency at school, you will receive an email notification, a text message and an 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 via email and REACH (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 the IT Department at [Helpdesk@mxschool.edu](mailto:Helpdesk@mxschool.edu).

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

- Your expectations regarding communication with you (is a daily call, email, or text important?) • Your student's permissions, as you have established with the School
- Use of phone and data contract (how much texting and data use will you 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
- Use of Amazon, etc., and overall on-line shopping

Technology information and support: Information on recommended computer purchases and protocols come to families in the spring enrollment packet, and the Technology Department can answer any further questions. There is public computer access in each dorm common room, Eliot Hall and in the Library.

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.

Middlesex 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.

We request that parents do not provide students with enhanced/independent networking or "hot spot" technology.

We urge parents not to send gaming apparatus (including multiple screens and large monitors) to school; doing so often has a material negative impact on sleep, quality of school work, and overall social connections.

### **A Brief Middlesex Lexicon**

The Acorn Lot: the gravel parking lot located at the north entrance to the School between the athletic facility and Lowell Road. Day students park or are dropped off and picked up in this lot.

The Anvil: The School's student produced newspaper.

AOD: Administrator on Duty who carries a phone during the afternoons and overnight to help manage any emergency.

BAP: the Bass Arts Pavilion houses the School's theater and abuts the Danoff Center for the Visual Arts

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

Chapel Chorus: a chorus that requires no audition. It enrolls 80-100 students.

Choices: fall semester program for 9th graders

Connections: fall semester program for sophomores

Cut: an unexcused absence from a mandatory school obligation.

DSP: parking lot located on the side of the athletic building farthest from Lowell Road.

Detention: any student, day or boarding, who has run afoul of the discipline system can be required to serve detention which is supervised by a Deans' Office staff member.

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

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

The Fort: The Fortmiller Studio Theater is our blackbox theater.

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

Frafty: "Free afternoon" when a student lucks into an afternoon without classes

Free Day: A day of no classes to allow the community to celebrate, recover, or simply catch its breath as needed.

Green Rooms: bi-annual student performances from the Arts 14 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.

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

One Acts: a performance in February of student directed short theatrical pieces.

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

Prox card: the ID/swipe card that opens public access buildings and dorm doors and works at the grill and bookstore.

REACH: the in-house boarding and day student location management system.

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 Wednesday during Faculty Meeting.

Small Chorus: the “elite” chorus that combines the Bullfrogs (boys) and MXolydians (girls). Students audition for this chorus.

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.

SWAG: a second girls chorus (in addition to the MXolydians) available only via audition.

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.

### 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. 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.

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 10 pm or 10:30pm in the evening and to be on campus on Sundays. There are rich returns for students, in terms of their understanding 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. House **proctors** and **peer supporters** are trained to provide advice and support for fellow students. **Peer tutors** are available during extra help 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 five faculty members. The Head of House is the leader of the dorm team; they maintain the permissions line and are in charge of residential life in that house for their 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 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 more than 400 teenagers and more than 170 (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 8:00 pm (please check the calendar for 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 “campus” 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 child 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.

- 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 in advance of 8:00 pm, the start of study hours, or before 8:30pm at the end of vacations or long weekends.
- 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 **drop off day students 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 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 7:30pm, 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, we collect cell phones from ninth and tenth graders; 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 Grades 9, 10 and 11 at different intervals throughout the evening. **However, if your child comes to school with a means 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 they know your limits.** 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. Please do not provide your child with hot spot capability or extensive gaming apparatus.

- 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. Please honor these dates and do not extend school breaks for family vacation plans. 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.***
- 7) Car services: Students must obtain face-to-face permission from a faculty member in order to use any type of car services (including Uber, Lyft, taxi, etc.) and sign out using Reach. As determined by a student's permission form, a parent phone call may also be required. Permission to travel beyond the immediate area (Acton, Bedford, Burlington, Concord, Carlisle, Lexington, Lincoln, Sudbury or Westford) can only be granted by the student's Head of House or the Deans' Office and is subject to a student's individual permissions. With the exception of travel days, car services and taxis may only pick up students in the Acorn Lot. Please know that the School cannot assume responsibility for students who choose to use these types of services. We recommend, however, that students and parents review carefully the terms of service of any provider so engaged. See "Automobiles" in the Student Life section of the Handbook for more information.

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 Wellness 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 proctored study hall, the Library, the Rachel Carson Center and the Bass Arts Pavilion from 7:30-10:30pm;
- *Faculty "roamers,"* who walk around campus and through buildings from 7:30pm 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;
- *Dorm access is restricted after 10:30pm, including security alarms.*

In the winter, because all athletics except skiing move indoors, practice schedules require alteration of students' afternoon and evening schedules. When students are scheduled for evening practices, they attend proctored afternoon study halls, held in the Library, to compensate for missed study time.

On Saturdays and Sundays, the FICs are responsible for monitoring all events, including meals, and each dorm has at least one faculty member on duty over the weekend.

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, 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. *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 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: The fall play, winter dance recital, Holiday Concert, spring musical, and spring choral and instrumental concerts are popular for parents to attend. 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.

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.*** To this end:

- Cheer for, not against
- Support the officials
- Respect the coaches
  - Help your child to become an able and mature communicator by letting your child do the work of navigating relationships and challenges with coaches and teammates.

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.

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 their own way. This charge appears on student bills.*

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, and the Baccalaureate dinner and service. On Sunday, graduation begins at 11am (outdoors, weather permitting), lasts about two hours, 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, and Spring Carnival.**

Just a word on **Casino Night**, probably the most highly anticipated event of the year. Students may choose to attend this event with a “date” or not. 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 viewed as a romantically-linked event!). While many students seem to enjoy the drama of asking and being asked, many students also attend with groups of friends. And while some 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 traditional swing dance band. 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. 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. 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 “campus 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 or they can take students away from campus and peers and result in students' missing opportunities to connect with other students on campus. In the best situations, students 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 designed to support student well-being and achievement, we will 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 through a Deans' Permission request in Reach. The Academic Office, Dean of Students and the Athletic Director or Director of Arts as appropriate 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.
- 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. The Academic Office, Dean of Students and Athletic Director or Director of Arts as appropriate 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. We do not grant credit for study abroad programs, nor do we permit students to remain enrolled at Middlesex if they choose to pursue options that conflict with the Middlesex calendar. Questions can be directed to the Assistant Head.

### **The Role of Wellness and Counseling**

The Handbook outlines the role of the Wellness Center staff and the resources available to all students, day and boarding, through our Wellness 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) 402-1465 or our Director of the Wellness Center at (978) 371-6582. Here are some further notes of special interest to parents:

- 1) Prescription medication and the Wellness 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 Wellness 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, they go to the Wellness Center. If a day student is sick, parents should call the Deans' Office to report the absence. Policies regarding serious illness or injury are fully outlined in our Handbook.

- 3) Role of family physician: Clearance to participate in School activities including athletics must come from Middlesex Wellness Staff. Our Wellness 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.

### **Status (day or boarding) Changes**

As stated in the Handbook, status changes boarding-to-day or day-to-boarding 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 and Dean of Admissions with the understanding that the request should be accompanied by significant documentation supporting the request. Absent extraordinary mitigating circumstances, all requests for status change should be submitted prior to February 15<sup>th</sup> for the upcoming school year.

### **Inside the Discipline Process**

While the discipline process for major School rules 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: While the Discipline Committee works with all due speed, we don't rush discipline conversations, and it is usual for the 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 and 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:

Class IV, 9th grade year: Roughly 75% of the class comes in as a 9th grader. During this year, students carry 5 courses plus one of the half-credit arts courses; they participate in Intro to Mindfulness; health and wellness, and *Dialogues Across Difference* modules; they participate in three seasons of formal athletics; they participate in the Choices program that sets the foundation for expectations for community life. Many students begin or continue studying music through music lessons, audition for a singing group or join Chapel Chorus (no audition required), or audition for one of several theatrical performances through the year. 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 9th graders are “in” for the night at 8:00 pm. We strongly urge 9th grade day students to leave campus at 8 pm; if they must remain on campus, they must sign in to the Library study hall until 10pm and be picked up directly at 10pm. 9th graders who are involved in evening play rehearsals will go over the schedule with the play’s director. On campus, study hours run from 8:00-10:00 pm, with “free time” in the dorm between 7:00-8:00 pm, with lights out at 10:30pm (unless special permission to do an unusual amount of homework has been granted, known as “late lights”). 9th graders 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 determined based on the student’s years.

All students 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. For some students, coming to class with everything they need can be a challenge, at first, and teachers spend time over the course of the year working with 9th graders 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. 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 their 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.

All students are encouraged 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.

Class III, the sophomore year: During the Class III year students take 5 courses plus the half-credit arts course and the Writing Workshop, our signature writing program. Sophomores are involved in the Connections

program, an extension of 9th grade Choices, and enjoy a special sophomore class orientation that occurs on one of the first weekends of the school year, bringing the class together and setting the tone for the year.

Sophomores are involved in three seasons of formal athletics and 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 parents). Many students begin or continue studying music through music lessons, audition for a singing group or join Chapel Chorus (no audition required), or audition for one of several theatrical performances throughout the year. Sophomores are “in for the night” at 8:00 pm along with the 9th graders. Sophomore day students can sign in to the library for study hall, but must leave campus promptly by 10:00pm. The sophomores also complete some form of drug and alcohol education.

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. 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 strength and conditioning for one season or can become involved in a service project in lieu of athletics. Juniors are more likely to participate in the ensembles and choruses (in addition to taking music lessons) or find themselves cast in mainstage productions. Many day students drive to campus, parking in the Acorn Lot.)

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. Many students choose to take part in the SAT or ACT test prep program we host, which meets throughout the fall. Students take national standardized tests as appropriate. 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 their 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. All students are offered at least one leadership position for their 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 leadership meetings held by the Deans of Students. Seniors take a minimum of five courses; many choose to take a sixth or to develop an Independent Study Project (“ISP”) with a faculty member in an area of interest. 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 lead the arts program, taking advantage of their prior experience to participate in choruses, ensembles and theatrical productions. Seniors are invited to dinner at the Heads House in small groups with faculty members. Seniors also have the most freedom 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 off campus seniors can take, seniors manage considerable independence.

Seniors meet with the college counselors and with college representatives who come to campus, work on actual applications, and finish the standardized testing process. Some seniors 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 in the fall. News from early applications begins arriving 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. It is usual that by the end of the early phase (end of January), most seniors 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 Prom and graduation.

Graduation is a wonderful event, with a baccalaureate service the prior evening. On graduation morning, 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.

### **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, Human Sexuality, and Mindfulness

10th grade: Connections; Drug and Alcohol Education; Mindfulness for new 10th graders

11th grade: Consent education; junior interviews and conversations; Mindfulness for new 11th graders; Unraveling Racism, and MX Scholars

Seniors: Senior leadership orientation, Senior leadership meetings; Project Impact

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

October: Class Meetings

November: Community Life meeting by house; Community Day

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

February: Junior interviews; Wellness Week programming

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

April: Earth Day - sustainability; Day of Silence Observation; senior transition meetings;



Community Life by house– peer advice and looking back on the year

May: Class chapels and 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 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 these opportunities, space is often limited, and students need to respond to the notices they receive quickly.