

GREAT OAK MIDDLE SCHOOL

June 2, 2017

Dear Parents of Incoming 6th Grade Students:

Welcome to the Great Oak community! My name is Anthony Hibbert and I am finishing my second year as the Great Oak Middle School Principal. I have over 20 years of educational experience spanning grades PK-12. I have taught at two of Connecticut's grade 7-12 schools (Litchfield High School and Wamogo High School) and served as a middle/high school assistant principal, middle/high school principal, elementary school principal, and district curriculum coordinator. At my last district prior to coming to Oxford our middle school was named a New England League of Middle Schools (NELMS) Spotlight School and as the Connecticut Association of Schools 2015 Middle School of the Year. Those awards were a testament to the hard work of teachers and students and to the power of working cooperatively with parents and the community.

At Great Oak Middle School I want to continue that success by building strong relationships with parents, students, staff, and community partners. Together we will support the academic, athletic, and co-curricular programs at Great Oak. I look forward to working with all of you to develop well-rounded students who will be successful both now and into the future.

I thought it would be helpful to share some middle school information which might not be familiar. I use PowerSchool to send informational emails called ENEWS to parents (just like this email) and will post copies of these letters to our school website (<http://goms.oxfordpublicschools.org/>).

I hope you find this information helpful!

Safe and Healthy School Environment

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Ensuring a safe and healthy school environment or culture is a critical piece in helping each student reach his/her fullest potential. While strong classroom management and developmentally appropriate discipline is an important component, celebrating positive behaviors is also critical. A school with a healthy climate is inviting and supportive, and its students are motivated to achieve while also maintaining appropriate and close relationships with their peers and teachers.

This year we planned a system of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). PBIS is a system where we teach behavioral expectations as we would any other element of the curriculum. As a whole school we will have clear and consistent expectations that engender friendship and respect for all. We will launch our PBIS program at the start of the school year.

Organizing Relationships To Maximize Learning

Middle School Model / Team Approach

Each grade is divided into two teams (6 Green, 6 Yellow, 7 Green, 7 Yellow, 8 Green, 8 Yellow). Each interdisciplinary team consists of an English, math, science, and social studies teacher. The teams create smaller learning communities within the school allowing teachers to build powerful relationships among themselves and with their students. The teachers on each team have a common planning period to: coordinate student assignments or assessments, contact and involve parents, effectively address student needs, and set high expectations for all students. I also believe that the team creates a sense of cohesion and harmony for students.

It is important to know that the teams are heterogeneously grouped with no team being more advanced than another. Teachers differentiate instructional strategies and learning assessments to meet the needs of all students.

In my opinion the middle school or team approach is an organizational structure that empowers teachers so they, in turn, can develop each student to his or her fullest potential during the critical developmental stage of adolescence.

Unified Arts Rotation

At the middle school level, Unified Arts classes are taught by the quarter (45 days). Students take two Unified Arts classes a quarter and those classes meet daily. Unified Arts classes include: art, computers, health, library, physical education, Spanish, technology, and some students choose to join the band or chorus.

Class Times

Classes are 54 minutes long. The length of classes allow teachers greater opportunities for creativity, student-centered learning activities and differentiated instruction. Each school day ends with "Flex" which is a 20 minute period for students to see their teachers to receive additional support as needed.

Whatever It Takes (WIT)

In addition to the core subjects and unified arts, students will be assigned to a "Whatever It Takes" class. During this period students will have opportunities for remediation and enrichment in the core content areas, along with the development of study skills and 21st Century skills (problem solving, informational literacy, collaboration, communication, community and civic responsibility).

Instructional Methods

Differentiated Rigorous Instruction

Differentiation is a way of teaching which requires teachers to know each of their students well so that they can provide learning experiences which enable each child to improve academically (and socially). It is my expectation that every student experiences rigorous learning opportunities which do not overwhelm them nor bore them. Differentiated instruction requires: ongoing formative assessment of student learning, knowledge of the various needs of students, collaboration, problem solving, and various instructional and assessment opportunities.

Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI)

Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) are a way to provide support and instruction to students who are struggling to learn. A student's progress is studied and the findings are used to make decisions about teaching and other learning supports. Reading, math, and behavior needs are most commonly addressed using SRBI.

Universal Assessments of Student Learning

The middle and high school use the STAR assessment in reading and mathematics as our universal assessments and to monitor the progress of students throughout the year. This program is similar to the NEWA Map testing that is done at the elementary level.

Some General Information about Great Oak Middle School

School doors open to students at 7:45am.

Classes being at 7:58am.

School ends at 2:43pm.

On early dismissal days school ends at 12:45pm.

The process for picking a student up at regular dismissal (instead of riding the bus) is different from OCS. Parents come to the front of the school and sign their children out on a clipboard that a staff member has. The staff member is stationed under the canopy. You do not need a note to pick your child up at dismissal time.

If your child is late to school you come to the main office and sign your child in.

If your child is sick or not coming to school, please call the main office at 203-888-5418.

A Sample 6th Grade Schedule

Sixth grade specials classes meet period A and D. Band is offered three days a week period A and chorus is offered two days a week period A. If a student takes band or chorus that student is placed in WIT the opposite days period A. If a student does not take band or chorus the student takes other specials classes.

What follows is a sample 6th grade schedule. You will notice that English, math, science, and social studies are year-long classes. Band and chorus are also year-long classes. All other specials classes are one marking period long – approximately 45 days.

Period	1 st Marking Period	2 nd Marking Period	3 rd Marking Period	4 th Marking Period
A 7:58-8:54	Band/Chorus or WIT	Band/Chorus or Library	Band/Chorus or Computers	Band/Chorus or Technology
B 8:57-9:53	Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies
C 9:56 – 12:22	Science	Science	Science	Science
D 10:54 – 12:22 LUNCH 10:54-11:22	PE	Health	Art	Spanish
E 12:25 – 1:21	ELA (English)	ELA (English)	ELA (English)	ELA (English)
F 1:24-2:20	Math	Math	Math	Math
Flex 2:23-2:43	Flex	Flex	Flex	Flex

After School Sports

We offer the following sports:

Fall: Boys Soccer, Cheerleading, Girls Soccer, and Girls Volleyball

Winter: Boys Basketball, Cheerleading, Dance Team, and Girls Basketball.

Spring: Baseball, Softball, and Track

After School Activities

We offer the following after school activities:

Drama Club

Make a Difference Club (community service oriented)

School Garden Club

School Newspaper

Yearbook (for 8th Graders)

Walking Club

Home-School Communication

I believe that a healthy and positive relationship between school and parents helps all students reach their fullest potential. I would like to work with parents and our community to do whatever it takes to help all of our students. We will be working this year on improving school to home communication and developing ways to include parents and the community in meaningful ways. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any suggestions, questions or concerns at hibberta@oxfordpublicschools.org or 203-888-5418.

My Best,

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