



Making the Transition: for Families of 6th Graders

This document is a resource for parents new to John Glenn Middle School (JGMS) created by parents in the JGMS community to organize and disseminate general school information and procedures. This is an unofficial source of information to help families know what to expect in making the transition to middle school. The guide is arranged alphabetically by topic, grouped by the time of year students and families are most likely to encounter each subject.

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Preparing for the school year

- **Aspen**

The Bedford Public Schools uses a web-based management software system called Aspen to communicate with parents and students. Teachers use Aspen to publish assignments, record scores and update overall averages. Interim and final grades are posted during the school year. Using Aspen allows students and their families to track academic progress and results in each class. When grades are posted, parents are able to note whether their son or daughter has been turning in homework and whether or not he or she is receiving full credit for work that is turned in. Parents are also able to monitor their child's test scores in order to determine if assistance is needed in helping them study and prepare.

Aspen also manages administrative details such as student Emergency Cards and attendance records. Parents can also register for inclusion in the JGMS Student Directory published each fall. Usernames and passwords for parents are mailed in August. Student accounts are distributed after the school year begins in September. All students in the same family throughout the Bedford Public Schools are managed under the same account. The Aspen website is <https://x2.bedford.k12.ma.us/x2sis>.

- **Athletics**

JGMS offers six sports during the fall season — boys' soccer, girls' soccer, football, cheerleading, field hockey and co-ed cross country. Two sports — boys and girls basketball — are offered during the winter season. In the spring season, baseball, softball and co-ed cross country are offered. 6th grade students are eligible to try-out and participate in co-ed cross country both in the fall and spring seasons. As 7th and 8th graders students are eligible for the additional sports.

In order for any student to participate in athletics at JGMS, the student is required by the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) to have a physical exam every 13 months. The best time to have the physical exam is between June 15th and August 15th to ensure the athlete is covered for the entire school year. In addition to the Current Physical and Permission Form for the physical, the Parent Permission Form, Medical Questionnaire Form and the Waiver Form must be completed and returned before August 1 of the same year. All forms are located on the JGMS website, under the Athletics topic of the Student Resources section <http://www.bedford.k12.ma.us/jgms/resources/athletics.html>

- **Curriculum**

Beginning in September 2008, JGMS is adopting a new daily schedule which provides for six daily class periods of 55 minutes each on a six-day rotation. (See Schedule topic below.) The goals and objectives of this new schedule are laid out in several documents available on the JGMS website, under the Scheduling Committee topic of the Parent Resources section. A sample 6th grade schedule for the 2008 – 2009 year can also be found there within the PowerPoint Presentation.

- Core classes

Core classes — Math, Science, Social Studies and English — will meet five days out of the six day rotation. Student Owned Strategies (formerly Reading) and foreign language classes will meet three days out of the six-

day rotation. Arts/Wellness (formerly Unified Arts) classes, including art, music, physical education and life skills, will meet either one or two days out of the six-day rotation. With this approach students have the opportunity for a variety of meeting times for their core subjects, which supports learning style differences. For more information, refer to the 2008 – 2009 Curriculum Guide on the JGMS website, under the Course Catalog topic of the Parent Resources section

<http://www.bedford.k12.ma.us/jgms/resources/catalog.html>.

- Choice classes

Choice classes are classes that students elect to take based upon interest. For each grade level students have certain required Arts/Wellness classes that run for a full year and they have elective choice classes that run two days out of the six day rotation for a semester each. Students have one choice class each semester, with the exception of band, orchestra and chorus, which are full year choice class options. Choice class selections vary by each grade level. For more information, refer to the 2008 – 2009 Curriculum Guide on the JGMS website, under the Course Catalog topic of the Parent Resources section

<http://www.bedford.k12.ma.us/jgms/resources/catalog.html>.

Questions regarding your child's schedule or course selections should be directed to his or her guidance counselor.

- **First Day of School**

On the first day of school in September, all 6th grade students should report to the Auditorium. Thereafter, students report each school day to the Auditorium until the bell rings to go to first period class, where attendance is taken.

- **Learning Groups and Teams**

Sixth grade students at JGMS are placed in learning groups, comprised of a group of students who are instructed together, with the objective to create balanced groupings. For the most part, learning groups travel together from classroom to classroom throughout the day. These learning groups are then placed into two 6th grade teams (red and blue). Students within each team share the same team teachers for their core subject classes. Almost all 6th grade classes are held in the A wing, separate from the 7th and 8th grade classrooms. Questions regarding your child's schedule or course selections should be directed to his or her guidance counselor.

- Leveling

The approach to organizing classes and teams changes beyond 6th grade, when leveling begins. The leveling process is described in detail in the 2008 – 2009 Curriculum Guide on the JGMS website, under the Course Catalog topic of the Parent Resources section

<http://www.bedford.k12.ma.us/jgms/resources/catalog.html>. For 7th and 8th grades there are no learning groups, but students are arranged into four teams: two 7th grade teams (purple and navy) and two 8th grade teams (green and grey). Each teacher team consists of a math, science, social studies, English and special education teacher.

- **Lockers**

Incoming 6th grade students receive a postcard via mail in July inviting them to go to JGMS to choose a locker before the school year begins. This may be advisable if your child has a particular need for a higher or lower level locker. Otherwise, lockers are assigned the first day of school. Most lockers are located in the A wing of JGMS, where the majority of 6th grade classes meet. The lockers have built-in locks with a predetermined combination that is assigned by the school. Students are expected to keep their locker neat and clean. To help reduce stress during the first few days of school, consider setting up your child's locker with school supplies and practicing the combination lock a few days before school begins. A plastic milk crate can be useful for organizing materials.

- **Lunch**

At JGMS there are three daily lunch periods of 21 minutes duration: Lunch 1 runs from 11:04 – 11:25; Lunch 2 is 11:40 – 12:01 and Lunch 3 is 12:03 – 12:24. Each student's lunch schedule will vary between the three scheduled lunches over the six-day rotation. Each lunch will include students from all grades and groupings of students may vary depending on the schedule rotation. There is one main entrée and two side dishes served daily. A substitute selection, such as a bagel or a sandwich, and often a self-serve salad bar offer an alternative option from the primary entrée.

Lunch is cash only. Parents may also send in a check to cover the cost of lunches for a certain period of time. Regular lunch is priced at \$2.00. Super lunch, which includes an entrée and two sides, is priced at \$3.00. Reduced lunch is priced at \$0.40. Ala carte milk is available for \$0.50/carton. Bread, fruit, juice and milk are served with all meals. The current weekly menu is available on the JGMS website, under the Lunch Menu topic of the Student Resources section <http://www.bedford.k12.ma.us/jgms/resources/menu.html>.

- **Map**

Copies of a map of JGMS are available at the school office.

- **Physical Education**

The JGMS physical education program requires that all students wear a uniform t-shirt when they participate in class. T-shirts are preordered from the JGMS Physical Education Department via an order form that is mailed to each student's home in June prior to the start of the 6th grade year. 6th grade students may also be required to purchase an inexpensive heart monitor for fitness activities.

- **Scavenger Hunt**

JGMS Administration and faculty host a scavenger hunt for all incoming 6th graders in August just prior to the start of school. The date and time of the scavenger hunt are mailed to incoming 6th graders during the summer. The intent of the hunt is to help incoming students become more familiar with the layout of JGMS. A map is included

and small prizes are collected along the way. Teachers may be present in their classrooms.

- **Schedule**

Beginning in September 2008, JGMS is adopting a new daily schedule which provides for six daily class periods of 55 minutes each on a six-day rotation. Therefore, a student will have a Day 1 through Day 6 schedule, rather than a Monday through Friday schedule. The Day designation will be widely communicated and publicized throughout JGMS via the daily announcements and a visible "date board", as well as printed in each student's planning agenda.

This schedule will increase time for learning in all assigned subject areas. Longer classes will allow teachers and students the time to complete in-class investigations that they currently cannot complete. Students will be given ample reminders to learn the rotation of days. The class times within the day will remain constant for 6th graders. An additional three minutes are built into the first period for attendance and school announcements. Between each class period, three minutes are allotted for passing. Again, students will have sufficient opportunity at the beginning of the year to become accustomed to their schedule without penalty for being late.

The daily bell schedule is available on the JGMS website, under the Bell Schedule topic of the Parent Resources section

<http://www.bedford.k12.ma.us/jgms/resources/bell.html>.

- Snow Days

If a day of school is missed for a snow day, the schedule for the next day does not change and is preprinted on each student's planning agenda.

- **Transition Meetings**

In May, following a visit by JGMS Administration and counselors to all 5th grade classes at Lane School, the students and their parents are invited to an evening meeting and presentation at JGMS. Parents meet with the 6th grade teachers and JGMS Administration while students meet separately with JGMS Student Council members, peer leaders and their advisors. The intent of the program is for both parents and students to learn more about JGMS, provide an overview of 6th grade life at JGMS, and answer any questions. Parents and students then join together to take a walking tour of JGMS at the end of the program.

In June all 5th grade students visit JGMS during the school day for a tour of the school.

- **Welcome Letters**

In August, welcome letters from the JGMS Principal and team introduction letters are mailed to incoming 6th grade students. Included in this mailing is a copy of the student's schedule and a suggested school supplies list. Note that due to laws governing personal privacy and consent, a list of your child's learning group classmates will not be distributed with the schedule. A complete JGMS faculty list including team teachers, unified arts and foreign language teachers, specialists and counselors is available on the JGMS website, under the Faculty List topic of the Administration section <http://www.bedford.k12.ma.us/jgms/admin/faculty.html>.

During the school year

- **Advisory**

At the beginning of the year, students are assigned to an advisor. During the 14 minute advisory period each day between the 2nd and 3rd periods, a teacher, administrator or other qualified staff member will meet with students as a group to address a broad range of students' concerns. The advisor is also another adult at JGMS that students may turn to for individual assistance. Students may bring a healthy snack from home to eat during the advisory period.

- **Agenda**

JGMS provides an agenda book to every student at the beginning of each year to write down and keep track of all homework assignments and projects. The agenda will include the rotating day schedule. At the beginning of the year, teachers may initial assignments and ask parents to sign off on assignments. This is a handy tool to improve student organization and scheduling skills, especially for longer term projects.

- **Communication**

There are many methods of communicating with JGMS available to parents including: contacting teachers by phone or email; scheduling appointments with the principal, the assistant principal or one of the counselors; the automatic phone message system; the JGMS web site; the student planners/agendas; open houses; parent-teacher conferences; the School Advisory Council; and interim reports and report cards.

- Daily announcements from the JGMS office are sent via email to those who have registered to receive them on the JGMS website home page.
- Newsletters

The Principal's newsletter is published monthly from September through June. Additionally, the MSPA also publishes a monthly eNewsletter which contains both JGMS and MSPA news and information along with a calendar of upcoming events. Both newsletters are posted on the JGMS website home page. If you are registered to receive daily announcements and eNewsletters, an email is sent to notify you when the JGMS newsletter has been posted to the web site. Printed hard copies are also available in the JGMS office.

- **Counseling**

The JGMS counselor is the student's advocate — an advisor and person who can assist the student with a wide variety of issues that may arise during the school day. Students are assigned to a particular counselor, usually by grade level or alphabetically, and should also feel free to approach any one of the counselors on staff. Students are encouraged to arrange time for a confidential meeting with their

counselor and may bring a friend if needed. Group sessions of various kinds are held throughout the year.

Throughout the first term, sixth graders meet with their counselor by learning group for one period each week during Health class. Many diverse topics are discussed and explored in a relaxed atmosphere as students learn about JGMS, the staff and the expectations at the Middle School. Students new to JGMS will benefit greatly from the Newcomers' Club, which is held for one term or throughout the year as needed.

- **Dances**

There are typically three dances each school year, which are held at JGMS from 7:00-9:30 pm. All JGMS students are invited to attend and the dances are for JGMS students only — student IDs are verified at the door. Proper dress and behavior are important. At each dance, there is an area set up with board games so students have a place to relax and converse away from the dance. Students (and their parents) are responsible for their own transportation. Students must make prior arrangements if they will be arriving late. The cost of the dance is \$7.00 (subject to change) and includes a slice of pizza and a soda.

- **Homework**

Homework is an essential part of a student's education as it often reinforces or reviews content and allows students to practice concepts taught in class. In the sixth grade, it is appropriate to expect 25 minutes a night for homework in each major subject area, including foreign language (keep in mind that it is rare that every subject assigns homework every night). Furthermore, there is a maximum of two announced tests or quizzes per day.

At the beginning of the school year, the teachers send home a letter describing their expectations for the class and student, including homework requirements, and often requiring both parent and student to sign off in agreement and return the letter. In the first few weeks of the school year, parents may be asked to sign their child's agenda, where homework assignments are recorded. If there is an issue with homework, parents should write an explanation to or contact the appropriate teacher. Completed homework assignments are recorded for the student in Aspen.

Long-term projects are assigned in advance by major subject area teachers and Arts/Wellness (formerly Unified Arts) teachers, with the understanding that students will plan to do their work over the entire time — not leave it to the last minute. Due dates for long-term projects may fall on days when quizzes and/or tests occur, and parents are encouraged to help their child budget their time accordingly. Questions regarding your child's homework assignments should be directed to the respective teacher.

- Extra Help

When students need extra help with their studies, they can arrange to meet with the respective teacher on an individual basis. JGMS teachers are often available before school, after school, and during elective time. There is also a Homework Club available, which is held in the library three days a week after school.

- Getting Organized

Students that are having difficulties organizing and completing assignments can reach out to their counselor. After speaking with parents and teachers, the counselor may suggest a monitoring system for the student. With cooperation, the monitoring process often improves organization skills.

- **Magazine Drive**

The September Magazine Drive is the primary annual fund drive for JGMS. Run by JGMS, information packets are sent home with each student in September. MSPA volunteers assist in order collation and verification. Students are encouraged to participate and prizes are awarded for attaining certain goals. Forty percent of each sale goes directly to JGMS with the proceeds used to fund enrichment programs, teacher grants, team funds and 8th grade graduation.

- **Meetings**

Parents who wish to meet with any of their child's teachers can call or email the teacher directly. For a meeting with the teacher team, call or email the team leader.

- Parents' Night — Early Fall

This evening event is for parents or guardians only, to meet their child's teachers and receive information about the class subject and curriculum. Traditionally, Parents' Night models the student's daily schedule, with parents moving from classroom to classroom for ten minute presentations. This evening is not intended as an opportunity to meet with teachers individually.

- Parent-Teacher Conferences — Late Fall

Parent-Teacher conferences typically occur in November and December. Appointments for conferences are booked online. Instructions for making appointments for conference times are published in advance in the newsletter.

- **Middle School Parents Association (MSPA)**

The Middle School Parents Association (MSPA) provides support for the JGMS staff and students. The purpose of the MSPA is to facilitate communication between parents and JGMS, as well as to raise and distribute funds to supplement programs and services available to JGMS students and faculty. More information is available on the MSPA website, <http://www.bedfordmspa.org/index.htm>.

- **School Portraits**

School portraits are taken in September at JGMS by New England School Portraits, a division of Burlington Studio of Photography.

- **Student Directory**

In the fall, the MSPA compiles and produces a directory with important JGMS phone numbers, along with the names, parent names, phone numbers and addresses of JGMS students, if authorized by parent/guardian through Aspen or a written

permission slip. The directory is available for purchase through the MSPA, by preorder or at Parents' Night. Additional copies are available in the JGMS office for a limited time.

- **Student IDs**

In the fall each 6th grade student receives a student ID that is used to gain entrance to the JGMS dances, as well as to receive student discounts at various venues in the area.

- **Volunteers**

Volunteering at JGMS is primarily organized through the MSPA. In addition to serving as an MSPA officer, parents can chair and participate in the following areas to support JGMS: Bedford Day, Bxotops for Education, Dance Coordinators, DC Committee, Enrichment, Fundraising, Gardens and Grounds, Good Cheer, Library, METCO, Moving On Ceremony, Newsletter, School Advisory Council, Student Directory, Teacher Appreciation and Teacher Luncheons.

Additional Resources

- **Calendars**

- The Bedford Public Schools calendar is available at <http://www.bedford.k12.ma.us/jgms/resources/calendar.html>
- The JGMS calendar is available at <http://www.bedford.k12.ma.us/jgms/resources/calendar.html>
- The athletic calendar for all the Bedford schools is available at <http://www.highschoolsports.net/>.
- The music calendar for all the Bedford schools is available at http://www.bedford.k12.ma.us/bhs/music/music_calendar.html
- The Bedford Town calendar is available at <http://www.eventkeeper.com/code/events.cfm?curOrg=02459>

- **Internet**

The Bedford Public Schools maintain a very informative and useful website, located at www.bedford.k12.ma.us. Access is provided to the following information:

- Aspen
Aspen is a web-based data collection and reporting system that is used by the Bedford Public Schools to report on student progress and manage administrative data. The Aspen website, <https://x2.bedford.k12.ma.us/x2sis>, is available in several places on the Bedford Public Schools website and each of the individual school's websites. Both parents and students receive their own username and password to access the system.
- E-newsletters

Use the link on the Bedford Public Schools website <http://64.69.117.104:81/enewsletter/> to sign up and receive newsletters for each of the Bedford schools electronically.

- General Information

The General Information menu on the website includes links to information about the district calendar, links to the town and other websites, lunch menus, MCAS schedules, job postings, school cancellations, school hours and a telephone directory.

- Central Administration

The Central Administration menu includes links to information about the business office, the computer department, curriculum, research and technology, special education and the Superintendent's Office.

- Bedford Public Schools

Access four links — one to each of the four schools: Bedford High School, John Glenn Middle School, Lane School and Davis School. By following the links to each respective school, you can find more specific information about student work, grade curricula, news, projects, lunch menus, and links for students and parents.

- School Committee

The School Committee menu includes links to information about the agenda, the school committee, the meeting schedule, the process for contacting members, and electronic versions of presentations made to the school committee.

- **Parent Handbook**

The JGMS Parent Handbook — a vital source of information is available on the JGMS website, under the Parent Handbook topic of the Parent Resources section <http://www.bedford.k12.ma.us/jgms/resources/phandbook.html>. This document covers all administrative policies of the school, including absences, discipline and procedures for parents to address academic or behavioral concerns.

- **Student Handbook**

The JGMS Student Handbook — a vital source of information is available on the JGMS website, under the Student Handbook topic of the Student Resources section <http://www.bedford.k12.ma.us/jgms/resources/shandbook.html>. A duplication of the Parent Handbook, the handbook is intended as a guide to help students get to know their school and become an active participant.