

*South Eastern Middle School*

*Middle School  
Survival Guide*

# *ABC Survival Guide Dictionary*

## **A**genda

Students are encouraged to use an agenda or planner to help keep track of assignments. It is a good idea to take your agenda or planner home each night so you can remember what assignments you need to do.

## **A**ctivities

Middle school isn't only about tests, projects, and homework. Getting involved in school activities is a great way to meet new people, develop talents, and provide a service to the school. Some activities take place during the school day, and others meet after school. In addition to sports, students may choose from activities like student council, National Junior Honor Society, Envirothon, drama club, Red Cross Club, chorus, band and orchestra. Listen to the morning announcements for information about joining any of these school activities.

## **B**ehavior

At SEMS there are school-wide behavior and classroom rules. These include showing respect for yourself and others, following directions, taking care of school and personal property, and following the NO-BULLYING RULES.

Bullying Rules:

- We do not bully other students.
- We help students who are bullied.
- We include students who are left out.
- We tell an adult at school and/or an adult at home when someone is being bullied.

## **C**afeteria

The cafeteria is used as a place for relaxation, socialization, and leisurely eating. Students sit in the part of the cafeteria that is reserved for their team, and may choose where they sit in that section as long as they are responsible about following cafeteria rules and procedures. The lines to the kitchen move quickly so there is plenty of time in the 30 minute lunch period to eat and talk to friends.

## **C**ARE Team

If you have a problem or suspect that another student needs help with a problem, you can complete a CARE Team referral form. The members of our CARE Team will then assist the student with getting help with the problem in a confidential manner. The school counselors, principal, school nurse, and several teachers are on the Care Team.

## **C**haracter

Your character is the total of all traits that make up who you are. Middle school students have many questions about life and relationships, and sometimes find themselves dealing with difficult situations. Building strong character traits, such as honesty, respect, self-control, good judgment, and responsibility, are important for learning how to deal with problems. You will often be judged by your character, which is revealed by your values, thoughts, words, and actions.

## **D**ances

The student council sponsors several school dances for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade SEMS students. There is also an 8<sup>th</sup> grade formal in the spring time every year. Students look forward to these dances which are usually held on a Friday evening. Any SEMS student who has not had a recent suspension may purchase a ticket for the dance.

## **D**ecisions

In middle school you will have more decisions to make and decisions will become more difficult than when you were younger. One of the advantages of growing older is becoming more independent and having more choices about taking care of yourself. Putting yourself first by doing what is best for your body, your emotions, your academics, and your relationships keeps you in control of your life. If you don't like the results of your decisions, there are always new opportunities to make new choices and try new directions. It is an adventure!

## **E**ffort

Effort is a key to good grades at SEMS. Many students discover that some of their 7<sup>th</sup> grade classes may require them to spend more time and effort studying for tests, working on assignments, and preparing for projects than they have experienced in the past. The extra effort is usually rewarded by good grades and the satisfaction that comes from meeting your goals.

## **E**xercise

Exercise for your body and mind are important. At SEMS you will do both. You will learn and be challenged, which exercises your mind. You will participate in gym to exercise your body.

## **F**ield Trips

The 7<sup>th</sup> grade students will attend the Young Women's and Men's Leadership Conferences separately in the fall. This is a great opportunity for students learn more about stress management, healthy relationships, body image, goal setting and leadership skills. The event will feature a keynote speaker who will present topics that build on the theme of positive self-concept and empowerment.

## Friends

In middle school, friendships often deepen. It's natural to spend more time talking and hanging out with friends. This is also a time when kids form cliques. Making new friends is an important part of middle school. Although many 7<sup>th</sup> graders continue the friendships they've had since elementary school, you may find yourself outgrowing some of your old friendships and changing your group of friends. Middle school students are constantly growing and changing. If you find yourself losing interest in some of the things your friends want to do or if you want to try something new, it may be the time for making new friends with whom you may have more in common. Some students also choose to find new friends when they discover that their old friends are making some unhealthy decisions and pressuring them to join them. Real friends like you and respect you because of who you are and will not pressure you to fit in.

## Gossip

The urge to talk about some interesting new information about a classmate can creep into all of us once in a while. It's normal to want to engage in this kind of gossip occasionally. If you do it rarely, GREAT! However, it is very uncool to intentionally spread rumors to hurt others. Although you may be trying to gain some attention and popularity at the time you are spreading the rumor, you will be remembered for the pain you've caused. No matter how tempting it may be, you've got better things to do than to be part of the gossip factory.

## Guidance

The guidance office is on the first floor next to the main office. The counselors, Mrs. Bowman and Mrs. Panopoulos, welcome students to stop by to discuss concerns or questions they may have about school, friends, and other issues. Students who want to speak to a counselor can stop in the guidance office and sign up for an appointment.

## Gym

Seventh graders have physical education and health classes during the school week. Most students look forward to participating in the various sports and fitness activities. A gym uniform with appropriate shoes is required. Coming prepared to gym class is rewarded with a good grade.

## Homework

Homework is a daily fact of life in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and it can have a *big* effect on grades. Students who are responsible about doing a good job on homework and turn it in on time usually do very well in school. Since students have several different teachers throughout the school day, it's easy to lose track of homework assignments. Writing homework assignments in your agenda is way to be sure you don't forget!

## Honor Roll

Each marking period the Distinguished Honor Roll and Honor Roll will be determined for SEMS students. Students who qualify for the Distinguished and Honor Rolls are recognized with a certificate and their names are listed in the local newspapers.

## **I**ndividuality

Be yourself! Most middle school students want to fit in and be accepted, but it is also important to learn *who you are* – to trust your own feelings, respect yourself, and to take pride in your own ideas, interests, and talents.

## **J**uggling Activities, Social Time, and Homework

There are so many interesting activities to participate in during middle school that it is very important to learn to use your time wisely. It's easy to spend too much time on one thing and not enough on another. When this happens something gets neglected and this can create stress. Use the calendar in your agenda to list your school projects, sports activities, social events, etc. so you can meet your responsibilities and still have time for fun and recreation.

## **K**ing

Be a leader in school. Lead with kindness.

## **L**eaning on Others (asking for help)

Everyone needs help now and then, especially when starting in a new school and dealing with all the confusing changes middle school students go through. There are times when you may need advice, encouragement, or simply someone to listen. It is normal, human, and healthy to ask questions and to ask for help. There are many people (counselors, nurse, teachers, and administrators) at SEMS who are willing to support you if you seek assistance.

## **L**ockers

Every 7<sup>th</sup> grader is assigned a locker near their homeroom. The lockers are in very good shape and very easy to use. Students are permitted to visit their lockers when they arrive at school before homerooms, lunchtime, and at the end of the day. Being prepared for each class with appropriate books, notebooks, and materials is a challenge for some 7<sup>th</sup> graders at the beginning of the year. Students find it helpful to have two separate notebooks; one for morning and one for afternoon. This helps to keep materials organized and makes it easy to get the right books at lunchtime. Don't store your books in a friend's locker and don't give your combination to anyone else. If you forget your combination, you can check with your homeroom teacher or the guidance office secretary.

## **M**eticulous

Always try to do your best. Never settle for mediocrity!

## **N**o

The word "No" is a powerful word, especially when students are dealing with peer pressure. It's natural to worry at times whether friends will like you if you don't go along with their ideas. Learning how to say no and keep your friends is an important skill in middle school. Your reward for being able to make good decisions on your own is more freedom, less nagging, fewer reminders, and more trust and respect from peers and adults.

## **N**otebooks

Many of your classes will require that you keep a notebook. Sometimes these are graded, and they usually contain most of the information you need to study for tests. Many times you will need to keep handouts, quizzes, and class work in your notebook, so it is a good idea to have a folder or notebook that enables you to insert these papers in the required order. If you tend to be disorganized and lose papers easily, it would be a good idea to come up with a system that will help you keep your notebook in order.

## **P**rocrastination

You will discover in middle school that getting older means having a lot more to do. Most students procrastinate at *something* – doing chores, cleaning their room, doing major assignments, or studying for tests. Sometimes delaying and putting things off until the last minute works out, but most of the time it results in a lot of stress, worry, and nagging from parents and/or teachers. The effect of procrastination can be dangerous – like shaking a soda can. Things seem like they are under control for awhile, but pop the tab and POW! Students who procrastinate in the middle school often find that their grades drop. Managing your time well can make your life a whole lot easier.

## **R**elationships

Changing to a new school can be tough going without support from other people. Relationships help us deal with fear, stress, and frustration. They give you a safety net which gives you the freedom to take risks and try new behaviors. Middle school is a time to build good relationships and communication skills, but these skills don't always come naturally. They need to be learned and practiced. Building good relationships with peers and teachers can be one of the most rewarding outcomes of your time in middle school.

## **S**tress

Stress is a part of life. It can be helpful when it leads to a good level of competition and performance, but it can cause problems if it is not coped with well. The key to dealing with stress at the middle school is to learn coping skills that work for you. A healthy lifestyle with enough sleep, healthy foods, exercise, and relaxation helps to release stress. Talking about your stress and learning to control your reactions can make stress manageable.

## **S**tudy Tips

Some students find that they need to develop good study habits when they reach the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. In the past it may have been easy enough to breeze through homework and barely open a book before a test, but most 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders need to study to do well. You will be responsible for learning and remembering more information in more subject areas. Managing study time, organizing notes, focusing, and finding memory strategies become very important.

## Success

There are many ways for students to experience success at the middle school. Each student has many different kinds of valuable personal characteristics and strengths that can bring success with academics, friendships, sports, and extra curricular activities. Try something new and you may find hidden talents that can bring you success in surprising areas. To be successful at something, it is important to make a goal and a plan for reaching it. It may mean breaking a bad habit or developing useful habits by making very small changes and sticking with them.

## Teachers

Most 7<sup>th</sup> grade students see as many as seven different teachers during a typical school day. Many students find that this variety of personalities and teaching styles makes the school day more interesting because they have the opportunity to learn in a variety of ways.

You'll get along better with some teachers than others, just as you do with your classmates. Although it may seem that it's their goal to torture you when you are loaded with homework, teachers really do want you to succeed. They are your partners in learning because the more successful you are in school, the more successful they feel. Try to figure out what is important to each teacher and what the rules and expectations are in each class. When you have a teacher who is really terrific, do your part to keep a good relationship, because that teacher can help you discover what you love to do and can be someone to go to when you have a problem.

## Unified Arts

In the coming school year, both 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders will have the opportunity to take Music, Tech Ed, Art, and/or FACS. These classes offer a variety of interesting hands-on-learning experiences. In FACS (Family and Consumer Science) class, students enjoy learning about food preparation and sewing. Tech Ed classes offer students the opportunity to use tools and machinery to solve problems and construct several different projects.

## Ups and Downs

Everyone has their ups and downs in the middle school, and you will witness a lot of drama in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Some people have said that it's like being on an emotional rollercoaster. These changing moods are normal, but they make it difficult sometimes for students to know how to understand themselves and their peers. Hormones and stress can cause some of these mood swings, and sometimes the intensity of your emotions can be surprising and even frightening. This can lead to misunderstandings, hurt feelings, and conflicts. Communication is often the key for dealing with confusing emotions and behavior. Talking about the situation with a counselor or teacher can help you to understand the feelings that led to the misunderstanding. Writing about your moods and emotions in a journal or a poem can also help release your confusing feelings.

## Values

What is important to you? The things that are most important to you will guide you through middle school. You may find your values changing at this time of your life, and you may also discover that your values differ from those held by some of your peers. Making decisions can be difficult, especially if you are experiencing peer pressure from people whose values are different than yours. When these situations occur, a person should decide what values are important to him or her, regardless of what peers think. Friends who have similar values and who can be trusted can give you the support you need to make it through tough times. They can also make you feel comfortable and accepted.

## Worries

It's not unusual for students to worry about what it will be like at a new school. You may remember wondering what 5<sup>th</sup> grade would be like when you were back in the elementary school. It seems like most students have the same concerns-What if I get lost? What happens if I can't open my locker? Will my friends be in any of my classes? Most of these typical worries disappear soon after the school year begins. A comforting thought may be that all 7<sup>th</sup> graders are experiencing this together. There are plenty of understanding teachers here to help out during that confusing first week.

## You

The brains of middle school students are not completely "cooked". Most middle school students are a mixture of interesting, changeable emotions, and personalities. You can be cheerful, dependable, focused, friendly, humorous, and confident one minute. The next minute you may be angry, forgetful, distracted, embarrassed, and insecure. One day your parents or teachers may believe that you are showing a lot of maturity, and the next day they are ready to send you back to kindergarten. Although this can be very confusing to you and everyone around you, it is *normal*. It really helps to find a reliable friend or adult to talk to when you are struggling to understand the person you are becoming.

## Zero Tolerance

Drug, Tobacco, Alcohol, Weapons, and Dangerous Instruments are all prohibited at SEMS. The student handbook has specific information about various serious discipline infractions. Awareness of school rules and regulations is a good way to avoid trouble.