



MIDDLE SCHOOL HANDBOOK

MS 8 MISSION STATEMENT

MS 8 is a learning community dedicated to creativity, academic excellence and intellectual curiosity, with the aim of developing life-long learners and engaged citizens. We are committed to the intellectual, artistic, moral, emotional, social and physical development of each child.

WELCOME

Welcome to a new year at MS 8! This handbook lays out our procedures and practices, and gives answers to many questions commonly asked by families. Keep it close at hand the entire school year!

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Welcome to MS 8! We are so pleased that you have chosen to spend these important middle school years with us. Our goal is to foster an inspiring and caring learning environment in which students can grow as learners and citizens of a community. We expect students to be a big part of creating that community by working hard, cooperating with us to maintain a calm and safe learning environment, and being kind at all times.

The goal of this handbook is to provide you with information about our middle school. Learn about our independent reading program, Advisory, Explorations, and policies and guidelines regarding school routines, attendance, homework, and more.

Our goal is to clearly communicate this important information to parents and students so that your years spent with us can be enriching and happy. Students and parents, please read this handbook in its entirety. Students, please bring any questions you have to Advisory. If additional information is needed, please contact the school office.

Seth Phillips, Principal

CORE VALUES

Our Community is Child-Centered

We strive to ensure that all decisions put the interests of children first.

Our Community Embraces Diversity and Individuality

We value diversity of culture, experience, and perspective.

Our Community is Inclusive

Believing that all people bring unique abilities and talents, we work to ensure that all members – including students, staff and families – feel a sense of belonging and find ways to participate in our community.

Our Community Prepares Students for Citizenship

We strive to develop students' understanding of the responsibilities of citizenship – both in and out of school – and work to give them the skills they need to become active members in a democratic society.

Our Community Works as an Effective Team

Staff, families and the larger community collaborate to achieve our mission.

Our Community Takes Responsibility

We search for answers and avoid excuses.

Our Community Acts with Integrity and Respect

Ethical and honest behavior is part of everything we do. We believe how we achieve results is as important as the results we achieve.

Our Community Strives for Excellence

We seek continuous improvement through reflection, innovation and thoughtful risk-taking.

ABOUT PS/MS 8

PS 8, also known as The Robert Fulton School: The Magnet School for Exploration, Research and Design, opened in 1846 at 65 Middagh Street, between Hicks and Henry Streets (now marked with a brass plaque). As the population of Brooklyn boomed in the late nineteenth century, the school outgrew its building and construction began on the current lower school building, which opened in 1906. Previously, the address was the residence of John A. Roebling, chief engineer and principal designer of the Brooklyn Bridge. Growth in student enrollment once again necessitated a larger facility, so in 2009 construction began on an addition to the 1906 building; the addition opened for the 2011-12 school year. In 2012, PS 8 was approved to expand to include a middle school serving grades 6-8 at a campus located on the fourth floor of Westinghouse High School on Johnson Street in downtown Brooklyn (less than a ten minute walk from the rest of the school.) Starting in the 2014-15 school year, PS 8 is serving students in grades K through 8. Like the community it serves, PS 8 is both historic and modern.

The MS 8 Middle School is a place where children are cared for and inspired to think critically, creatively, and solve problems. They are challenged to reach their greatest potential through a rigorous, well-rounded program of study that includes three years of advisory, physical education, technology, the arts, and two years of foreign language, in addition to a core curriculum of math, science, history and literature. Throughout their time with us, all students participate in our Exploration Program: two-week interdisciplinary, in-depth explorations which engage students in using their creativity, the resources of New York City, and their community to deeply understand a topic, issue, or concept.

Middle school is an exciting, transitional time for children, and we strive to facilitate this time by listening to the voices of children and families, and coming together as a tight-knit community. Our students will graduate with a deeper understanding of their world and a sense of their own power to make a difference.

Who was Robert Fulton?

Widely and wrongly credited with having invented the steamship, Robert Fulton (1765-1815) was actually an engineer who refined and improved the steamship design to make it practical. His first working steamboat traveled on the Hudson River from New York City to Albany in August 1807. Fulton and his partner, Robert Livingston, founded a successful commercial steamboat service between the cities and a ferry service that connected Brooklyn to lower Manhattan. A lesser-known fact is that Fulton's first career was as an artist, painting mostly portraits, including one of Benjamin Franklin.

ABOUT THE NYC DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DOE)

MS 8 is located in District 13 of the DOE. Our local district personnel:

- Barbara Freeman, Superintendent,
- Precious Jones-Walker, Family Leadership Coordinator, cell (646) 385-6212
- Lorrie Ayers, Family Support Coordinator
- Kim R. Lawrence, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent

335 Park Place
Brooklyn, NY 11238
(718) 636-3284

The DOE website, <http://schools.nyc.gov/>, provides a wealth of information, including the city-wide school calendar. Families can also find the DOE annual school report cards, parent and teacher survey feedback and the most recent Quality Reviews.

ABOUT THE SCHOOL DAY

Morning Arrival

Middle school classes begin promptly at 8:30 a.m. Students enter in the morning through the doors on Tillary Street. Beginning at 8:10 a.m., middle school staff will be at the entrance to the cafeteria to greet students. Starting at 8:10 a.m., students will line up and proceed through the metal detector and scanning machine. Students will then wait in the cafeteria until sent up the designated stairwell at 8:25 a.m.

Lateness

Middle school begins promptly at 8:30 a.m., and tardiness to school results in a loss of instructional time and disrupts classes in session.

Students who arrive to school after 8:30 a.m. must enter the building through the Tillary Street entrance and proceed to the main office, Room 402, to pick up a late pass. The late pass must be signed by the school secretary in order to ensure that the student is not marked absent for that day.

Please note that both attendance and lateness negatively impact students' applications to New York City public high schools. These absences are recorded and become part of a student's permanent record with the DOE.

Attendance

Attendance in school is mandatory. It is expected that all students will attend and will report to school on time. The school day begins at 8:20 a.m. for all students. Attendance will be taken daily during first period.

Every absence results in a significant loss of instruction. When a student returns after an absence, he/she must bring a written explanation to his/her Advisory teacher, signed by a parent or guardian. For absences longer than three days, a parent should contact the child's teachers for assistance in arranging a time to pick up any materials needed to complete work.

A student is considered truant for any of the following:

- absent from school without permission
- leaves school without permission
- absent from class without permission (cutting).

Appropriate follow-up measures will be taken for a student who is truant.

PLEASE NOTE: In the event a student is absent for ten or more consecutive days without explanation, the DOE automatically records it and requires documentation of reasons for the

absence.

Breakfast Program

Our breakfast program begins at 8:00 a.m. in the cafeteria. Breakfast is free for all students. No sign-up is required; students may simply take part any day they would like to.

Lunch and Recess

At lunchtime, students walk down the designated stairwell to the first floor. They will line up on the first floor until given the signal to head into the cafeteria. Students should sit down immediately upon entering the lunchroom. Students are welcome to bring their own lunches or they will be called by table to get in line for school lunch. At all other times, students must be seated. This ensures a calm environment for eating and sufficient time for clean-up before recess. Our students will have recess in the Westinghouse gymnasium.

To determine whether your child is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, all families must fill out a lunch form (available at: <https://www.applyforlunch.com/>) at the beginning of the school year. Please complete this form even if you know your child is not eligible. Payment for school lunches can be made in advance at the school office.

With approval from parents and middle school staff, students are permitted to go out to lunch in MetroTech Center. They may sit on the park benches and eat their own lunch or purchase lunch from a designated list of local establishments and are not permitted to go beyond designated boundaries. Staff is not present to supervise students during out lunch. Students must demonstrate the ability to independently manage their time and behavior in order to remain eligible for out lunch. Additional details, guidelines and a student contract and permission slip are sent home during the first week of school.

Dismissal

Students will be dismissed from their last period class at 2:50 p.m. and sent down our afternoon staircase. Students will exit onto Tillary Street -- out the same door they enter in the morning.

Early Dismissal

If a student has a medical appointment or any other reason why he/she must leave early, a parent, guardian, or other responsible adult listed on the Blue Card (see Emergency Contact section for Blue Card instructions) must come to school to get his/her child. That adult must come up to the main office in Room 402 and sign out the student before s/he leaves the building. Please do not call the school and ask anyone to send your child downstairs or ask us to have him/her leave early without an adult.

Transportation

MetroCards will be issued by the main office in Room 402. Eligibility for a full or half fare card is based on the student's traveling distance between school and home. If a MetroCard is lost, stolen or damaged, please report it immediately to the school secretary. Up to three replacement cards are allowed per year. It may take a few days or even longer to get a replacement, so be sure your child always has enough money to get to and from school. For information on eligibility, please refer to the DOE's Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT) website: <http://www.opt-osfns.org/>.

Travel Within the School Building

Switching Classes

As students travel from class to class, we ask them to do so in a calm and orderly manner. We always want our school space to feel safe and inviting. Students should always stay to the right in the hallways so that others may pass. Also, we ask students to use soft voices in the hallways so as not to disturb anyone who may be working and to maintain a calm atmosphere. When students arrive to their class they should line up by twos and become quiet when the teacher raises his or her hand, indicating that he or she is ready to begin class.

During Class

Hall passes are given to students who need to leave the room to use the bathroom. Only one student is permitted to leave the class at a time. Students may not use the bathroom during the first or last ten minutes of class, or during direct instruction.

A hall pass is required if a student leaves the classroom for any reason.

A student who receives a pass should have it visible and show it to any staff member who makes a request to see it. A student who is late to class as a result of a conference with school personnel will be required to present a late pass signed by the school official.

Leaving Campus

With the exception of "out-lunch," students are not permitted to leave the middle school floor unless accompanied by a teacher or administrator. Students should only use our designated staircase.

AFTER SCHOOL

Kids Cre8

Kids Cre8 is a PTA-run, fee-for-service after-school enrichment program with a limited number of scholarships available for students who are in need. . At our middle school, Kids Cre8 generally offers classes on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Classes generally meet for ten weeks; exact times and lengths may vary. Details about specific program offerings, costs, and registration deadlines are available at <https://ps8brooklyn.org/kids-cre8/>.

Attendance will be taken for students who have enrolled in activities during this time. Students will not be allowed to leave the building to go out to purchase snacks and return for after-school activities.

CURRICULUM

The curriculum at MS 8 is much more than a body of knowledge or set of skills. A commitment to inspire young people to love learning for their own sake lies at the center of our curriculum. To that end, our young adolescents engage in solving real world problems. We encourage them to explore their world and harness their creativity. They read deeply and widely and are invited to write for real audiences and genuine purposes. Students read, write, and present across the curriculum. Our students will discover that learning is what unlocks the tremendous power and potential inside each of us.

The Arts

Students will study visual art, drama, dance, music and more during their time with us. In addition, you'll see the integration of the arts in all that we do simply by walking down the halls of our school or stepping inside a classroom.

Humanities/ELA

In Humanities/English Language Arts (ELA), the goal is to inspire lifelong readers and writers. We strive to achieve a balance between student selected texts and writing topics and the challenge of exploring unfamiliar genres and subjects.

Students not only learn to read texts closely and critically, but they also learn the pure enjoyment and inspiration literature provides. Students choose their own texts as part of our independent reading program and engage in shared text exploration and discussion as part of our genre studies. At our middle school, you will find students who know themselves as readers and can articulate their goals and plans as independent readers. You will also see students sitting in circles, engaged in rich text based discussions. This approach guarantees that students have plenty of time to explore their own reading interests, but also have the opportunity to be exposed to a wide range of genres, including memoir, realistic fiction, classics, mythology, poetry, historical fiction, fantasy, and literary nonfiction.

We believe that students must write for real purposes and for real audiences. We use a process approach with an emphasis on revision. While students learn to write narrative, informational, and argumentative pieces, we ground that instruction in real-life genres students can find out in the world. Students write memoirs, editorials, informational books, websites, feature articles, short stories, and personal essays. Our students learn that writing is a powerful tool that enables them to impact their world.

Mathematics

Our school's emphasis on problem solving and creativity is central to our approach to teaching mathematics. We don't necessarily know what kinds of mathematical challenges our fast-paced and quickly changing technologically-rich society will present to our students in the

future, but we do know that students will need the ability to tackle such problems. Thus, we ground our mathematics curriculum in real world problems. We teach our students to collaborate to solve such problems together, and also to develop the self-discipline necessary to persevere through challenging problems independently. We engage students in the work necessary to develop deep, conceptual understanding, while never ignoring the need for students to have sharp computational skills.

At our middle school, you will find students engaged in rich discussions of mathematics. You will see them struggling with tough problems that require them to consistently articulate and revise their thinking. Our mathematicians can talk and write about their work. They pose questions and constantly push themselves and each other towards deeper understanding.

Physical Education

Through our physical education program, we teach students to be healthy in mind and body. Students engage in physical exercise through team sports and cooperative games. We teach them to appreciate the mind-body connection and the importance of stress management. Classes take place in our Fitness Studio or across the street at McLaughlin Park.

Science

During science class, our students engage in hands-on investigations, collaborate to pose and solve scientific questions, and learn the literacy skills necessary to engage in science at the secondary level. Students will be expected to read regularly for their science courses and will consistently write lab reports. In addition, starting in sixth grade, we teach students the research skills of scientists. During each unit, we find opportunities to tap into the many resources New York City has to offer, including the Brooklyn waterfront, local museums and educational institutions. We bring science out of the textbooks and into the real world where it becomes the powerful and exciting force we know it to be.

Social Studies/History

In social studies, we prepare students to be informed, enthusiastic, and critical citizens of the world. Research, literacy, and presentation skills are central to our social studies courses, as is creativity. Students write informational texts, essays, and even narratives in social studies. They create class newspapers from historical periods, write their own myths like those of ancient civilizations, reenact historical events, and debate important societal questions. Our social studies/history curriculum prioritizes depth over breadth. By deeply exploring case studies of particular times and places, students learn how the different aspects of a culture -- economy, politics, kinship, customs, art, technology, philosophy, and religion -- illuminate and impact each other, and help us connect that time and place to the larger world.

Spanish

We believe there are many benefits to studying a foreign language during the middle school years. During Spanish class, students are exposed to other cultures, have the opportunity to

experiment with language, and deepen their understanding of grammar. Our Spanish classes give students another place to practice their discussion skills, spur their vocabulary development, and lay the groundwork for future language study.

Exploration

The purpose of our Exploration units is to deeply engage students in learning. As educators, our ultimate goal is to inspire and prepare students to solve our world's problems. Our students are our future artists, scientists, inventors, educators, and leaders. With New York City as an extension of our classrooms, Exploration gives us an incredible opportunity to integrate education into the real world.

Multiple times a year students will engage in a deep, two-week study of one issue, concept, or topic. Students will read, talk to experts in the field, interact with the community, and visit some of the many cultural, historical, and educational institutions of New York City. Our exploration units make learning lively and meaningful for our students, and help us achieve our goal of preparing students to be creative and critical thinkers who have a positive impact on our planet.

Students will report to school and be dismissed at their regular time on Exploration days, but their daily schedule will be adjusted.

Library

Students will be expected to have an independent book with them at all times. They will have the opportunity to borrow books from their ELA classroom library once per week during a regularly scheduled period. If a student finishes a book before their class library day, they are responsible for making an arrangement with a teacher to visit the library or to bring in reading material from home or their local public library.

Outside Enrichment Partners

MS 8 and the PTA host enrichment programs in physical education, chess, art, music, dance and drama in our lower and middle schools. Visual and dramatic artists, musicians and dancers expose children to a variety of creative practices through residency programs that last up to twenty weeks. Resident artists collaborate with teachers to ensure that activities are suitable for each grade level and tailored to complement subjects and themes in the curriculum. You can find out more about enrichment partners currently providing classes and residencies at MS 8 on the website at <http://ps8brooklyn.org/academics/enrichment/>.

Advisory

Advisory is a time for students to meet in a smaller group of students and one teacher. The purpose of Advisory is to build community in our school. Advisory provides a time and space for students to learn about and discuss all of the important issues that impact our lives at school, but that do not always get addressed during their regular academic classes. Ultimately,

Advisory is about helping our students experience success and happiness during their middle school years.

In Advisory, we focus on helping students transition and adjust well to middle school. Middle school is very different from elementary school and we know that student success in this new type of academic and social setting will largely depend on the support our school provides. During sixth grade Advisory, we will address the following topics/themes: building a school community; study skills for middle school including time management skills, organization, class participation, task completion, and punctuality; knowing oneself as a learner and self-advocacy; nurturing healthy friendships and conflict resolution. During seventh and eighth grade Advisory, we revisit many of these themes, while also beginning to prepare students for the next stage of their school lives – high school. We are also open to any student or parent suggested topics for Advisory.

Why Advisory?

As our mission statement indicates, we are committed to the intellectual, artistic, moral, emotional, social and physical development of each child. Our Advisory program helps us work toward that commitment. The smaller student to teacher ratio helps build the strong relationships necessary to meet the needs of the whole child and the larger community. Advisory fosters a strong sense of identity, solid social skills, and a tight-knit community, which we know are essential to creating and maintaining a positive learning environment where all students can grow and thrive.

Independent Reading in Advisory

We know how important it is for students to have regular opportunities to read texts of their own choosing for long periods of time. It builds vocabulary and comprehension skills, and most importantly, a love of reading. We are committed to giving this time and space to our students every day.

This will provide yet another opportunity for advisors to build relationships with students and another way for students and teachers to get to know one another – as readers! It will also ensure that our students have uninterrupted, quiet time to read for pleasure each day in school, something we value very much.

Curriculum Night

Each September, families are invited to school to meet our middle school teachers and learn about each course their child will take.

Conferences and Appointments

Parent teacher conferences are held throughout the school year. Dates will be announced early in the school year.

Additional conferences can be arranged at other times. All teachers have full schedules during the day and cannot meet with a parent/guardian without a scheduled appointment. Please call the school or send a note to the teacher to make arrangements.

Report Cards

Report cards are issued twice a year to students at the end of each semester with progress reports issued halfway through each semester. The standardized tests do not factor into a report card. If you have any questions about your child's grades, please make an appointment with your child's teachers.

Standardized Tests

Children in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades take the New York State tests in ELA and math, as mandated by federal law. Parents and guardians receive a copy of their child's scores and percentile ranking. These tests are not used to calculate your child's report card grades, but your child may be held back or strongly encouraged to attend summer school if he or she receives low scores on these tests. For more information, see <http://schools.nyc.gov>.

Academic Support

We know middle school can be a challenge and we expect all of our students to struggle at some point! You know you are growing if you work through a struggle. But we are here to help and to teach students how to struggle without getting frustrated. We strive to teach students to know themselves as learners, become independent, and to advocate for their needs. In that vein, we urge students to take some steps if they find that they are struggling academically.

Steps for students to take if they are struggling in a class:

- Talk to your teacher. Your teachers are here to help you, but they won't know what you need unless you speak up! Many teachers offer extra help time during lunch.
- Speak to your advisor. Your classmates may share your struggle and you may be able to support each other in Advisory.
- Ask a friend to work with you. Sometimes, someone your age can explain things in a way you will understand better!
- Do not fall behind in your class or homework. Take the above steps to avoid falling far behind!

If a student takes the above steps and is still struggling with a particular class, please contact us so that we can work with you to assess the situation and decide if it is necessary to provide more support during the school day.

Special Education

We provide a continuum of services for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Services currently provided by the school include Integrated Co-teaching, Special Education Teacher Support Services, Counseling, Speech and Language Therapy, and Occupational Therapy. Services are provided as outlined in students' IEPs.

Grading

Purpose of Grades at MS 8

The purpose of grades is twofold: 1) to provide as clear a picture as possible of a student's learning which informs the second purpose of grading; 2) to help teachers plan appropriate instruction. We do not believe the purpose of grades is to rank, judge, and sort students, nor do we believe grades serve as the end goal of the learning process.

A Standards Based System

In a standards based system, clearly articulated standards provide the basis for instruction and assessment. In this system,

Teachers:

- Articulate standards
- Inform students about the standards
- Use standards to design instruction and assessment
- Use rubrics and other methods to clearly communicate student expectations
- Provide feedback to help students improve performance
- Communicate progress towards the achievement of standards

Students:

- Can describe the standards
- Use self-assessment and reflection to improve performance
- Take responsibility for their own learning
- Communicate progress towards the achievement of standards

Standards Based Grading

With standards based grading, we determine and articulate the learning standard we want students to achieve and develop a grade based on where students are in relation to that learning standard.

Students can earn the following grades:

- 4 - Exceeds Standards
- 3 - Meets Standards
- 2 - Approaches Standards
- 1 - Far Below Standards

NYC DOE utilizes percentage grades on report cards. Standards based grades will be converted to percentages for report card purposes.

Effort

We strongly value the effort that our students put in. We know that if we help students discover their interests, strengths and passions by providing a rich curriculum and effective teaching practices, while also guiding them to work very hard, we will have achieved our school's mission to create lifelong learners and engaged citizens. Thus, we will spend time working with students to understand what great effort looks and feels like. We will ask students to self-assess their own effort by writing a reflection at the end of each semester. This essay will be included with each child's report card.

We define effort by the following criteria:

- Deliberately plan and revise plans when necessary
- Complete tasks/stay committed and persevere, even when something is very challenging
- Figure out what we need and advocate for ourselves
- Have something tangible to show as a result of our work
- Spend plenty of time on our work
- Feel proud of what we accomplish

Homework & Organization

Homework in Middle School: Time Management

One of the great challenges of middle school is time management. Middle school is when students develop the independent work habits that they will need in high school, college, and beyond. No longer do teachers guide students through every step of a project, writing assignment, or course by giving short, nightly assignments. While teachers may assign some practice so that they can assess students' understanding, many of the assignments will be of a longer nature, which require students to manage their time very well. We are committed to helping students with this transition and will conduct a series of Advisory sessions to teach students how to manage their time now that they are in middle school.

Students will be expected to complete long-term projects, which require nightly attention. Instead of being given time to work on projects in class, students will be given lessons that they can independently apply to their projects and writing assignments at home. Teachers may assign longer reading assignments, which students will need to space out over time in order to complete by the due date. In addition, students will be expected to study material from class independently. For example, science and social studies notes, Spanish vocabulary and grammatical structures, math terms and procedures, and ELA vocabulary words should be reviewed regularly.

Here is something important for students to keep in mind: You need to work every single night. Your teachers might not assign specific homework every single night, but that doesn't mean

you shouldn't be working every single night!

Time Spent on Homework

Students should be working for an average of two hours each night. This includes, within that two hours, at least 45 minutes of reading. 45 minutes per night (from either their independent reading book or subject area reading) is the minimum daily reading homework.

If a student struggles with a homework assignment, we expect he or she will persevere, do their absolute best, and write down questions and bring them to class. If a student is working for an average of more than two hours a night, please bring it to our attention. We will work with the student and you to solve the issue.

Missing Assignments

Missing assignments will negatively impact a student's grades. It is the student's responsibility to make up missing assignments. To that end, students must make-up any missed work according to the classroom teacher's policies. Teachers may require students to spend lunch periods completing missed work.

Homework Tips

Tips for Students:

- Write your homework **neatly and clearly** in your planner. Ask your teachers questions if you do not understand the assignment.
- Trade phone numbers or email addresses with a friend who you can call if you are absent and need the assignment.
- Break up long-term assignments into smaller steps.
- Check off each assignment, or step of a longer assignment, in your planner as you complete it.
- Complete your homework in a quiet, distraction free space. As much as possible, complete your homework in the same space each day.
- Put your absolute best effort into EVERYTHING you do. Effort always counts!

Tips for Parents:

- Check your child's planner every night for assignments.
- Ask your child about long-term assignments. Encourage them to break them up into smaller steps and to write those in the planner.
- Make sure that your child works every night. Even when there is not a specific written assignment, there is always work to do.
- If your child is out sick, please have him/her call a classmate to get the assignment.
- If an emergency prevents homework from getting done, please write a note of explanation to the teacher.
- Talk to your child about his or her reading. Ask them what the book is about. After they tell you about the characters and plot, ask them what ELSE the book is about. We are

pushing our middle school students to think beyond plot and to explore themes and the author's craft in their books.

Supplies, Preparedness, and Organization

What You Need

Students need to be prepared at all times! In addition to their materials specific to each class, students should have the following with them at all times:

- H** Homework assignments/folders
- I** Independent reading book
- P** Pens and Pencils
- P** Planner

Tips for Staying Organized in Middle School

- Always have your planner with you and use it well. This means writing neatly in it, writing all assignments in it, and using it as a checklist to ensure that you complete ALL of your homework.
- Use a pencil case. Keep small items that you use a lot in it – pencils, sharpener, pens, erasers, glue stick, mini-scissors.
- Before you leave in the morning, do the “HIPP Ready Check.”
 - H** Homework assignments/folders
 - I** Independent reading book
 - P** Pens and Pencils
 - P** Planner

MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY BEHAVIORAL STANDARDS

Teaching Positive Behaviors

Our students' physical and emotional safety is our priority. Our staff will work hard to teach students positive behaviors and to build a warm, caring, and productive learning community. Our school values guide the behavioral expectations we have for our students. Here are some of the positive examples we strive to teach and reinforce in our students every day:

Our Community Embraces Diversity and Individuality

- We learn about, observe, or experience other cultures with respect.
- We use language that is inclusive and safe for all.
- We encourage our peers to be themselves.
- We celebrate each other's strengths and accomplishments.
- We are open to new ideas and experiences.

Our Community is Inclusive

- We invite everyone to participate in academic and recreational activities.
- We find ways for everyone to join in, even when it is challenging for them.
- We invite families and other community members to join us for school-wide events.

Our Community Prepares Students for Citizenship

- We think about how we can make our world better.
- We use our voices, spoken and written, to express our opinions.
- We solve problems or think about how we can contribute to solving them.
- We are active in the community.

Our Community Works as an Effective Team

- We work together on projects.
- We meet with everyone who can help us solve a problem.
- We listen attentively to try to understand what others have to say.
- We respect everyone's contributions.

Our Community Takes Responsibility

- We try to find answers to problems we encounter.
- We do not make excuses.
- We ask hard questions.
- We try to repair any harm we might cause.
- We admit our mistakes and apologize when we need to.

Our Community Acts with Integrity and Respect

- We are ethical and always honest.
- We consistently try to do the right thing.
- We play fairly.

Our Community Strives for Excellence

- We reflect on our work.
- We strive to improve.
- We take risks in our work.

Dealing with Challenging Behavior

We believe that the most effective way to guide and improve students' behavior is by developing and nurturing relationships with them as they grow into independent, self-aware young adults. This principle guides our system.

We know that adolescents will struggle with behavior from time to time and we embrace this very important part of our job as middle school educators. Therefore, our first response to any behavioral problem will be to engage in conversation with our students to try to understand them and help them strategize ways to be more successful. In addition, because we understand the importance of clarity and consistency for adolescents, we have developed school-wide language and procedures to address behavioral challenges.

Prior Interventions (i.e. some actions teachers and staff will take to prevent behavioral challenges):

- in class teacher conference
- seat change, conduct sheet
- proximity
- reminder card
- family contact
- differentiated assignment

The infractions that follow are about respecting the needs of the community. There will be a response if these things happen.

MINOR	MAJOR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cursing - defiance/direct opposition - ignoring directions - distracting sounds - distracting movements/gestures - out of seat - side of conversation - “cross-talk” (talk across the room) - ignoring routines (bathroom pass, etc.) - abuse/misuse of materials - horseplay/physically fooling around 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - throwing things - put-downs - fighting or putting hands on another in an aggressive way no matter the outcome - bullying - stealing - repeated minor infractions

Response to minor offenses:

STEP 1: Student gets verbal warning: Teachers will use the following language consistently: “This is your verbal warning.” *The teacher will clearly state the behavior that needs to stop. (The implication is that this is your chance to stop. If it continues, we go to the next level - see Step 2.)*

STEP 2: If the behavior continues, “This is your second warning and I am writing it down.” *Teacher writes student’s name down. (Not on board publicly, but on clipboard, in notebook, a tracker, iPad, etc - the student will see the teacher visibly record name. Students should know that if the behavior continues it will result in a more serious consequence - appointment with teacher and a referral.)*

STEP 3: Behavior continues: “Now this is a referral.” In this case at least 2 things happen:

1. Teacher gives student an appointment pass and student must meet with the teacher at the designated time - generally right before lunch. **If a student does not show up for their appointment, they will face additional consequences, most likely a lunch detention the following day.**
2. At some point that day, teacher fills out the referral form, an online tracking system all staff can access. On the form the teacher records the incident and can also choose from the menu of additional consequences - including formal mediation, phone call home from teacher, phone call home from administration, restorative practices/circles, family conference, lunch detention with teacher to reflect and make up work, conference with teacher and third party (advisor, another teacher, counselor, administrator).

Response to major offenses:

Move right to step 3. If appropriate, teacher may still do appointment pass with student, but this might be a time when administration will be involved immediately.

Major Offenses within the Classroom or School

The following types of behavior are extremely serious and in most cases will result in a serious consequence. Examples of major offenses include, but are not limited to:

1. Attempted assault or physical assault on a student and/or school employee. Suspension at the discretion of the school Administrator.
2. Possession or use of a weapon or demonstrating intent to use an instrument as a weapon. (Suspension is mandatory).
3. Possession, distribution or being under the influence of narcotics, alcohol, or other illegal substance abuse materials.
4. Defying the lawful authority of school personnel; insubordination.
5. Engaging in vandalism or other intentional damage to property belonging to the school, staff or other students. Parents and/or guardians are responsible to pay for the damages or make payment for work done under the school's direction.
6. Stealing or extorting money.
7. Setting off false alarms or bomb threats or carrying or igniting matches, fireworks or firecrackers.
8. Posting, distributing or making obscene, libelous or defamatory material or literature.
9. Smoking or carrying a lighted cigarette, cigar or pipe on school premises.
10. Engaging in sexual harassment, sexual assault or sex violation.
11. Engaging in arson, theft or activities causing riotous conditions.

Dress Code

If a student is found to be in violation of the dress code, his or her parent will be notified. The following are prohibited at our middle school:

- Tube-tops, halter tops, backless shirts/dresses
- See through or cut off shirts, low-cut, cleavage or midriff-exposing tops, side exposing shirts
- Anything that has to do with gangs, drugs, alcohol, or sex
- Headwear or coverings such as bandanas, do-rags, hoods, hats, and sunglasses. They must be removed when entering the building.
- T-shirts, jewelry, or accessories displaying inappropriate or offensive graphics or language

Cell Phones

Cell phones are allowed to be in a student's possession on the George Westinghouse Campus. If you would like your child to travel to school with a cell phone, please note the following procedure and policies:

- All cell phones must be stored and turned off at all times.
- Cell phones cannot be used in any space on the George Westinghouse Campus before, during, or after the school day, including weekends.
- Cell phones will not be stored for students on the George Westinghouse Campus.
- Use of cell phones in locker rooms or bathrooms is a suspendable act, and will result in a permanent loss of cell phone privileges.
- School personnel will confiscate cell phones if they are out or used:
 - during classroom instruction
 - in locker rooms, hallways, bathrooms, and any space in the building
 - to take pictures
 - to record classmates, faculty, staff, or any school personnel
 - for cyber-bully, e.g. posting negative comments on Facebook or any social media outlets
- School administrators, faculty, and staff will not be held responsible for any missing, stolen, or damaged devices.

Tablets and E-Readers

Students may have tablets and e-readers for independent reading. Tablets may not be used for web browsing or game playing. If a teacher observes any child web browsing or game playing on a device, they will confiscate the device and a parent will need to pick it up. That student will be prohibited from using a tablet indefinitely.

Prohibited Items

Given the parameters of our school building, the items listed below are not allowed in school or on school trips and will be confiscated during scanning in the morning.

- iPods, MP3 players, headphones, etc.
- Any handheld electronic video games
- Weapons or common objects to be used as such

FAMILIES WORKING TO SUPPORT MS 8

The School Leadership Team (SLT)

To ensure that families and school staff participate in the decision-making process, the DOE requires every public school to elect a School Leadership Team (SLT). A consensus committee composed of an equal number of parents/guardians and staff, the SLT works throughout the school year to help the administration develop sound educational policies that reflect the needs and interests of all school members.

As mandated by the DOE, the main SLT function is to review the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP). The CEP is a document submitted annually to provide a needs-assessment of the school, as well as objectives designed to address the identified needs. The SLT also reviews the school's budget to ensure it is aligned with the CEP objectives.

At MS 8, the SLT goes beyond these required tasks in an effort to be as responsive as possible to the concerns of our families.

The SLT conducts annual parent and student surveys, which enable the team to provide current and detailed information to the school administration about what is working well and what needs improvement. Recent SLT projects include:

- revising the Volunteer Handbook
- establishing Survey Gizmo as an effective and efficient means to survey the school community
- revising MS 8 Curriculum Guides
- exploring MS 8 workshop opportunities

The Parents and Teachers Association (PTA)

MS 8 has an active PTA that helps to build our community and enrich our children's educational experience. The PTA has as its objectives:

- to provide support and resources to the school for the benefit and educational growth of the children
- to develop a cooperative working relationship between the parents and staff of our school
- to develop parent leadership and build capacity for greater involvement
- to foster and encourage parent participation on all levels; and to provide opportunities and training for parents to participate in school governance and decision-making

The PTA plays a vital role in raising money through donations and events to fund special programs and workshops, enrichment programs, teaching assistants and some teachers, and school supplies and materials.

All parents and guardians are automatically members of the PTA, and the PTA encourages parents and guardians to participate — however they can — in their children’s education. The PTA is led by an executive board, which provides families with the leadership necessary to be active and effective partners with the school. It disseminates information, raises issues and concerns, anchors the school in the community, and represents parent interests on SLT and regional committees. The PTA executive board serves for one year and is elected each spring by the members of the PTA. Both PTA general meetings and executive board meetings are held monthly.

All PTA meetings are open to the public and families are encouraged to attend. For a schedule of this year’s meetings please see the calendar available at <http://ps8brooklyn.org/calendar/>.

Volunteering Opportunities

Ideally, each family would volunteer at least two hours a month to MS 8. Two hours a month is an invaluable contribution to our school community. When you donate time to MS 8, you meet new people, share your talents, and make your kids proud of you and their school.

There are essentially unlimited volunteer opportunities and many of them can be done outside school hours, on your own time. Time commitments vary greatly – from chairing an event, to a weekly time slot in the cafeteria/recess, to a two-hour shift at our pop-up store, to making phone calls during our auction solicitations – if you have any time to offer, there are plenty of ways to contribute!

Please visit our volunteer webpage at www.ps8brooklyn.org/volunteer and fill out our online Particip8 Form – which will help us best route your skills to where our school needs them. Please continue to visit our webpage to keep informed about upcoming volunteer needs – as well as visit our Particip8 Board in the main hallway where sign-up sheets will be posted throughout the year.

Some specific volunteer opportunities are described below, with contact information when available. For any additional questions about how you can get involved, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator at volunteer@ps8brooklyn.org.

Be a Grade Parent!

Grade parents are the main liaison between teachers and families. Whether it’s organizing volunteers for events or in-class activities, helping a teacher organize an in-class celebration, or merely communicating some classroom news, the grade parent is the point of contact.

Grade parents are also responsible for collecting gifts for the teachers and MS 8 staff at the holiday season and at the end of the school year. If you are interested in becoming a grade parent, please email our Parent Coordinator, Eileen Carrier and our PTA Class and Grade Parents Coordinator at classparents@ps8brooklyn.org.

Volunteer in the Classroom!

Sometimes family members may accompany their child's class on school trips or help with a particular classroom project. This kind of volunteering is usually coordinated by a teacher.

Have a Regular Volunteer Slot!

The school would like to have volunteers for regular commitments in classrooms and (potentially) during out-lunch in MetroTech.

If you are interested in becoming a regular volunteer, please contact our Parent Coordinator, Eileen Carrier for more information about how you can get involved.

Volunteer for an Event!

There are many PTA events throughout the year, designed to strengthen our community and raise money for our school. We welcome all members of our community to attend. We also encourage you to become involved in these events – as they depend on your support to succeed. A sampling of our events is available in this handbook and on our website. Keep an eye on the Weekly Upd8 email for sign-up opportunities. If you are interested in chairing any of these events, or have any specific questions about how to get involved, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator at volunteer@ps8brooklyn.org.

Volunteer on a Committee or Task Force!

Many parents and guardians fill critical roles by being involved in school committees or task forces. Committees are created based on school needs, parent interest/skills and funding (as necessary). Some current committees are:

Fundraising Committee

Email: fundraising@ps8brooklyn.org; grants@ps8brooklyn.org

The Fundraising Committee seeks to raise funds and marshal resources to support school programming, including specialty teachers and enrichment offerings. Specifically, we are in need of volunteers to organize the solicitation of donations/sponsorships from neighborhood businesses, conduct annual appeals and matching challenges, and manage specific fundraising events, such as Plates for 8.

Communications Committee

Email: communications@ps8brooklyn.org

The Communications Committee works to connect families to one another. This committee is responsible for keeping website content fresh and interesting, and creating amazing posters and flyers to be distributed around school. We are always looking for graphic designers, writers, editors, and those who know or are willing to learn WordPress to post new content on our website.

Technology Committee

Email: technology@ps8brooklyn.org

The Technology Committee is essential for the upkeep of the PS/MS 8 website, manages web updates, and is responsible for online payments. This committee also handles the export, formatting and maintenance of the beginning of the school year roster, student directory, and assists with Kids Cre8 After School registration. Maintenance of Google Drive, WordPress plugins, Domain, and WebHosting are also handled by the Technology Committee.

New Parent Welcome Committee

Email: welcome@ps8brooklyn.org

Our New Parent Welcome Committee welcomes all new families to MS 8 by organizing events and meetings to help make the transition to a new school as smooth as possible. Every kindergarten class and new students in Grades 1-5 are assigned a Welcome Committee member to help answer any questions pertaining to MS 8.

School Supply Drive Committee

Email: schoolsupplies@ps8brooklyn.org

The School Supply Drive is a fundraiser that supports MS 8 while saving parents time and money. The teachers and the PTA team up to develop a common list of grade level supplies that parents can buy online and then the supplies are delivered the week before school begins. MS 8 receives a percentage of the sales and parents buy the supplies at a discounted price.

Celebr8 Reading

Email: volunteer@ps8brooklyn.org

Help plan and execute the amazing events that make up our fall celebration of reading. They include the fork + pencil Book Fair, the Readathon, and the adults-only Night to Celebr8 Reading.

Celebr8 Science

Email: celebr8science@ps8brooklyn.org

This evening event offers lots of hands-on opportunities for students of all ages to engage in science experiments, questions, and activities – those of their fellow students, teachers and volunteer parents. Help support our budding scientists!

Kids Cre8 Committee

Email: kids-cre8@ps8brooklyn.org

The Kids Cre8 Committee helps implement the PTA-run Kids Cre8 After School enrichment program. We are seeking engaged volunteers willing to help out program coordinators manage budgets, insurance, the registration process, and billing. If you are interested in keeping this program going and affordable for all our families, volunteer your time to help with its management!

Garden Committee

Email: gardencommittee@ps8brooklyn.org

The Garden Committee is a group of teachers, parents, and school administrators joining

a network of city schools supported by NYC's Grow to Learn Program. The committee meets monthly to help plan, grow and maintain our school garden program.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES

Festivals and Events

MS 8 prides itself on having a strong, inclusive community. Throughout the year, there are various events designed to help bring families and other school community members together. Some events such as the annual PTA auction double as fundraisers. These activities take many forms, including potlucks, dances and more. Some of the major events are:

September

Welcome Committee Events for New Families

October

fork + pencil Book Fair

A Night to Celebr8 Reading

November

Fall Classic Softball Game

December

Holiday Craft Fair

January

Wine & Whiskey Tasting

Dunk for 8

February

Annual Gala & Benefit

March

Camp Expo

April

Celebr8 Science

May

Spring Golf Outing

June

Paddlewheeler

There are also in-school events designed to bring students together. At the middle school, these events include the Dance Parties, the Community Feast and the Turkey Bowl, the 8th Grade Trip, Dance and Graduation and Exploration Expositions multiple times throughout the year.

For a more complete list of all school events, check our online calendar at <http://ps8brooklyn.org/calendar/>.

COMMUNICATION

School Notices

Notices from the principal, assistant principals, teachers, and the PTA come home both in backpacks and by way of email. MailChimp is the system that both the school and the PTA use to send emails (including our weekly newsletter, the Weekly Upd8) to the entire school community. Principal Phillips, Parent Coordinator Eileen Carrier, the PTA and some teachers also use MailChimp to send emails to specific classes and grades. To register to receive these emails, you must fill out the online form available at <http://ps8brooklyn.org/signup/>.

Website

The PTA website, <http://ps8brooklyn.org>, is a source of essential information for the MS 8 community. Most of our website is open to the community and the public at large. It contains information about our school, our staff, the PTA, the curriculum, and our schedule, among other things. This is the primary place where we share information about upcoming events and news.

Registered members of our school community may also log into a password-protected portion of the website to access somewhat sensitive information such as PTA and SLT meeting minutes. To gain access to the password-protected portion of our website, please fill out the online form available at <http://ps8brooklyn.org/signup/> (the same form you fill out to receive school and PTA emails). Once we have verified that you are a member of our school community, you will receive an email with a user ID and password that will allow you to log in to our website.

Media Waivers

Families will receive a DOE media waiver form at the beginning of the year and are available on our Web site. Please fill out this form and return it as soon as you can. As part of its work to inform our school community about, and engage families in, the life of our school, the PTA makes an effort to publish student work and other students' written articles about our school community on the website, <http://ps8brooklyn.org/>. In order to publish student work or post photos on a website, we need permission from families. Having permission on file eases the process of improving communications about our school. Thank you for your help!

PS/MS 8 Weekly Upd8

The PTA distributes a weekly newsletter by email to all families, staff and students who have registered on our website. The newsletter generally comes out on Friday and includes information on school-related activities in the following week. To view the current and past newsletters, visit the password-protected portion of our website, <http://ps8brooklyn.org/>. As noted above, to receive these emails, you must fill out the online form available at <http://ps8brooklyn.org/signup/>.

Weekly Middle School Family Newsletter

A Family Newsletter is sent to middle school families each week. Here, middle school parents and guardians will find important information about upcoming events, a calendar of project due dates and tests, and ongoing information about how they can support their children at home. Parents and guardians should be sure that they submit their email address and fill out the online form available on our website at <http://ps8brooklyn.org/signup/> at the beginning of the year to ensure that they receive this important weekly communication.

Contacting Teachers

Parents and guardians are encouraged to reach out directly to their children's teachers with questions about specific classes or concerns. If you believe your child is having academic, disciplinary, or social problems at school, the first line of response, no matter what the problem, is your child's classroom teacher. Each teacher has an ms8brooklyn.org email address that can be found on the school's website. Teachers can also be reached via phone by calling (718) 875-1021.

Online Grade Book

Our middle school teachers record completed homework assignments and grades in our online grade book, Pupil Path. Every September, each family receives an account so they can access their child's grades at any time.

Middle School Parent Discussion Circle

A discussion circle for middle school parents meets periodically throughout the year to connect and share stories about raising adolescents. Topics discussed include independence, social media, bullying, and other topics of interest to middle school parents.

Parent Coordinator

Parent Coordinators encourage family involvement through workshops, volunteer opportunities and special events that promote the school. They also identify family issues that should be addressed by the administration.

The MS 8 shares a Parent Coordinator with PS 8. Parents can reach out to our Parent Coordinator, Eileen Carrier at (718) 834-6740 ext 1061 or parent-coordinator@ps8brooklyn.org.

Principal's Report at PTA Meetings

At each PTA general membership meeting, Principal Seth Phillips presents a principal's report. He provides updates about the school and invites questions from members of the community. For the dates and times of these PTA meetings, please see the online calendar, available at <http://ps8brooklyn.org/calendar/>.

Grade Level Meetings with the Principal

At least two times during the year, the school is planning to invite middle school families to speak with the principal. These meetings are organized by grade. They begin with an update from the principal on school-wide and grade-specific issues, followed by a question and answer session. Parents and guardians are encouraged to attend and discuss general or grade-specific issues or questions regarding the school and their children. However, this is not the forum to discuss specific teachers or specific classroom issues.

These meetings – PTA and grade-level meetings – occur at different times during the day to provide a variety of opportunities for parents and guardians with different schedules to hear directly from and ask questions of Principal Phillips. We hope that by providing opportunities at different times during the day across the year, all families will have at least one time that works for their schedules.

SECURITY AND EMERGENCY

Emergency Contacts (Blue Cards)

At the beginning of the each school year, an emergency contacts card, referred to as the Blue Card, is sent home for parents/guardians to complete. This card provides the school with contact information in case of an emergency involving your child during the school day. Please return this card promptly and update the card during the year if there are changes. It is the only way we have to contact you in case of an emergency. Also, please include multiple phone numbers for each contact on the Blue Card.

Emergency Evacuation Plan

In case of an emergency evacuation during the school day, middle school students and staff will relocate to Cobble Hill High School, located at 347 Baltic Street, between Hoyt and Smith Streets (about 5 blocks south of Atlantic), Brooklyn, NY 11201. Parents and guardians should expect to pick up their children there. Please check the PS/MS 8 website throughout the year for updates on this procedure.

Emergency Closings and Delayed Openings

The chancellor of the NYC DOE makes decisions about school closures and delayed openings by 6:00 a.m. on a given day. Families can find updated information by checking the DOE website at <http://schools.nyc.gov> or by calling 311, listening to local news radio (880 WCBS AM or 1010 WINS AM), local TV news, or the cable TV channel NY 1. If you have registered on the PS/MS 8 website, you will receive an email regarding closing and delays. Any school closure also cancels all field trips, after school programs, and school transportation for that day.

Visitors

All parents and guardians are welcome in the school. However, for the safety of children and staff, all visitors must enter and exit via the Johnson Street entrance and staircase, sign in at the desk, and show photo ID.

Allergies and Health Forms

Families should indicate any allergies their child has on the Blue Card and on the Health Form (<http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/21CE49B9-39BF-4752-AF82-ED7A67CED117/38865/CH207.pdf>) they will be asked to have filled out at the beginning of the school year. If your child has an epipen, you will receive an additional form to file with the middle school nurse, Rita Hogan, in Room 138. The Westinghouse building's main number is (718) 625-6130, and Ms. Hogan's extension is 173.

MISCELLANEOUS

Lost & Found

Our Lost and Found is located in the Main Office, Room 402. There is also a Lost and Found at Westinghouse High School located in Room 150.

Photos – Class and Individual

Each fall a professional photographer takes individual and class photos at the school. The photos are returned to families before the winter holiday recess. This is a fundraiser for the school, so please be sure to place an order.

NOTE: Media waivers are distributed to all families at the beginning of the school year and are available on our Web site. Please fill them out and return them as soon as possible. This allows our PTA (and the school) to publish photos and student work on our website (<http://ps8brooklyn.org/>), which helps us inform our school community about, and engage families in, the life of our school. Having permission on file eases the process of improving communications about our school. Thank you for your help!

Trips

All children should have permission slips signed by a parent or guardian on file for neighborhood walks. For longer field trips, separate permission forms will be sent home for signature. No child may attend a field trip without a signed permission form.

DIRECTORY

Addresses

MS 8 is co-located with George Westinghouse High School and City Poly High School.

Middle School 8
The Robert Fulton School
105 Johnson Street, 4th floor
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Contact Us

Seth Phillips, Principal: SPhilli@schools.nyc.gov

Eileen Carrier, Parent Coordinator: parent-coordinator@ps8brooklyn.org

Office: (718) 875-1021

Website: <http://ps8brooklyn.org/>

PTA Email: pta@ps8brooklyn.org

PTA Co-Presidents: president@ps8brooklyn.org