

August 9, 2021

Dear Middle School Parents;

I hope that this letter finds you happy and healthy, following a summer that hopefully felt a bit more “normal” than last summer! I do have to admit that I am very excited for this upcoming school year; whether your child share this same degree of enthusiasm might be another question. While there will be many new changes to the rhythm and flow of this school year, due to the building and renovation of our Middle School building, I am writing to welcome you and your family back to Seven Hills, with best wishes for a wonderful and productive 2021-2022 year! Along with this, I offer a special welcome to our families who are new to the Seven Hills community. I, along with the rest of the Middle School faculty and staff, am excited to get this year up-and-running in a manner that embraces the spirit of doing the very best we can for the most important members of our Middle School community: the students.

As you can well-imagine, much work has been done in preparation for the upcoming year. Most of our old Middle School building has literally vanished, with the new building taking quick shape in its place. Our temporary Modular Middle School Campus has come together in fast fashion in Parking Lot A and is ready for the new school year: click [here](#) for a map of the temporary Modular Middle School campus. In this spirit, faculty and staff have been busy preparing their new classrooms and spaces to offer the best opportunities for students to learn and grow in this new modular campus.

Aside from preparing this new transitional community for our students, we have also been attending to the regular preparations for the upcoming school year. New student schedules have been created, new books and materials have arrived, and some summer admissions work has occurred. I would like to especially thank Middle School Dean Andy McGarvey and Middle School Administrative Assistant Julie Reutener for their work in helping to keep “things” running this summer. Please be sure to thank them for their efforts when you see them on campus.

All of these efforts are in preparation for the first day of in-person school on **Tuesday, August 24<sup>th</sup>**. Be sure to carefully read the enclosed materials so that you and your child are ready to begin this academic year in great shape. Please note that the following documents/information are contained in this Opening of School electronic mailing:

- Head of School welcome back letter
- New faculty profiles
- Food Service Information:
  - Food Service Charging
  - Free or Reduced pricing for lunches
- Middle School Parent Community welcome letter from Wendi Lopez

You will also be receiving, via US postal mail (sent on 8/9/21), the following documents:

- Middle School Parent FAQs
- Middle School Student Supplies List
- Student Picture Day information from Life Touch
- Key Dates for the 2021-2022 School Year

I also ask that you carefully review with your child the **2021-2022 Seven Hills Family Handbook** that will be posted on the Middle School Stinger Central page (click [here](#) to access this page) so that everyone is familiar with the Middle School's guidelines and expectations.

For our families who are **new** to the Seven Hills community (NOTE: this **does not include 6<sup>th</sup> grade families who were at Doherty or Lotspeich last year**), I invite you to attend a special orientation for new parents and students, as noted below:

- New Parents Orientation via Zoom: **Thursday, August 19<sup>th</sup> from 7:00-8:00 PM** via Zoom (a link will be emailed to all new parents prior to this date/time)
- New Students Orientation: **Monday, August 23<sup>rd</sup> from 1:00 – 3:00 PM** in the Kalnow Gym.

As you prepare for the first day of school, please remember the following important times and details for the start and end of the school day:

- 7:30 – 8:10 AM: students may be dropped off at school. Parents are requested to drop-off their child between the Schiff Center and the Upper School building (aka The Middle School loop), as in years past. Once dropped off, students are to go to Founders Hall.
- 8:10: students go to their first bell classes for attendance, announcements, etc.
- 8:20: classes begin
- 3:15 PM: end of the school day
- 3:15 – 3:30: For students who are not participating in after-school activities (e.g. sports practice, play rehearsal, etc.), parents are requested to pick-up their child by no later than 3:30 between the Schiff Center and the Upper School building (aka The Middle School loop), as in years past.
- 3:30 – 6:00: Students who are not picked up by 3:30 PM and are not involved in an after-school supervised activity are to register in Founders Hall for the after-school *Encore Club*. There will be supervision in the Founders Hall until 6:00 PM.

As we all prepare for a new school year, I can't help but think about the challenges and struggles that we have all faced during this past year and find myself wondering how our children have understood and processed the multitude of crisis that have unfolded before their eyes. As if on cue, I discovered Charles Kenney's recently published, [Your World, Better: Global Progress and What You Can Do About It](#), a book written for Middle Schoolers that examines how our world has changed since the days when their parents and grandparents were young. This book talks about the things that have gotten better, the sometimes-intensifying challenges that remain, and what readers can do about them.<sup>1</sup> In his book, Kennedy shares with his readers that global tragedies still exist:

*Some people still die young. Many people lose a parent or a grandparent – or more than one—way too early. Families still live lives of hunger and misery. Covid-19 and its impacts demonstrate we can backtrack on health and poverty. People still get locked up, often for things that shouldn't be a crime. Racism, sexism, and abuse of minorities remains rampant worldwide. Amongst the things that are getting worse, progress towards democracy has reversed in recent years, the coral reefs are bleaching, and the climate is getting hotter.*

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However, Kennedy also shares with his readers facts and data that clearly paint a more optimistic understanding of the world:

*And even though life in America has got better since your parents or your grandparents were young, life in the rest of the world has got better even faster. We are really fortunate we live in this country, because people in the U.S. are still amongst the healthiest, the most educated, and the richest worldwide. But the rest of the planet is catching up. From Asia to Africa to South America, fewer people are dying young, fewer people don't learn to read, fewer people urinate or defecate in a field or street rather than in a toilet.*

What I so appreciate about Kennedy's approach is that he acknowledges the current perceptions and realities of our world while simultaneously citing facts and data that illustrate the certainty that we, as humans, are confronting and successfully improving the world, despite these many challenges. And it is just this approach that mirrors what we strive to do in our Middle School community. We help students see and understand their world in ways that are both factual and realistic, and strive to imbue them with the belief that they have the agency and ability to be powerful, independent, inquisitive, happy, healthy, and compassionate individuals who can make a positive difference in the world they will soon inherit. And while this is an ambitious goal for our faculty and staff, it is one that truly matters at this point in a Middle Schooler's life.

Directly related to the health and happiness of our students is the ever-changing world of social media and technology that has a profound effect on the developing minds of Middle School students. Whether it is through the iPad or a smart phone, all of our students have access to portals that bring the world literally to their fingertips. At school and in the classroom, we strive to educate students about the important roles they have as responsible digital citizens. However, at this stage of their intellectual and social emotional development, many of our students naturally struggle with making thoughtful decisions when it comes to communicating with their peers. Realizing that we all share a responsibility in educating our children about the positive and negative attributes of social media, Taylor Markovits (Middle School Counselor) and I will again be holding meetings that are **respectfully required for all new Middle School parents** to discuss the power and importance of social media and communication for Middle School students. Listed below are the dates/times of these meetings, all of which will be conducted over a Zoom meeting platform (invitations will be sent out in an upcoming Friday Blast communication to all Middle School families). While there is no need to RSVP, please identify on your family calendar one of these meetings for you to attend:

- August 25 (Parent Night): 5:15-5:45 PM
- August 30: 6:30 – 7:00 PM
- August 31: 8:30 – 9:00 AM

Aside from participating in one of these meetings, please know that there will be other opportunities for you to attend an exciting series of Middle School Parent Community meetings throughout the year that will focus on key developmental issues and topics that we, as parents, need to understand. More information about these parent educational meetings will be shared with you in the very near future.

As the change from the end-of-summer to the beginning-of-school is shockingly on the horizon, I do hope that you will find time to be with family and friends in order to squeeze out some final bits of summer before we return on August 24<sup>th</sup>. If you happen to find yourself on campus in the weeks to come, I encourage you to stop by my temporary office in the Briggs Administrative Building and say "hi." If, between now and then, you would like to get in touch with me, please feel free to do so.

Again, my best to you and your family for a great school year!

Take care.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "-Bill". The signature is enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

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