

**STEPHEN DECATUR MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**BULLDOG**



**PRIDE**

**Productive Responsible Involved Determined EVERYDAY**

**STUDENT HANDBOOK**

**Stephen Decatur Middle School**

**9815 Seahawk Road**

**Berlin, MD 21811**

**410-632-3400**

Dear Students and Parents:

We would like to welcome you to an exciting learning and positive experience at Stephen Decatur Middle School. We hope you find this educational journey an interesting one. Very soon you will be making more friends meeting new teachers participating in interesting activities such as student government clubs, sports, service organizations, team events and team projects. More importantly, you will be developing your academic skills and learning to be an effective problem solver.

As a National Blue Ribbon School and a five-star school as rated by the US Department of Education ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) academics are extremely important at Stephen Decatur Middle School. We expect every student to maintain a serious attitude about all schoolwork including homework. If you were not satisfied with your performance or progress last year if you thought you could have done better or are sorry you didn't you have a fresh start. Now is the time to set new goals.

The faculty and staff of Stephen Decatur Middle School are committed to helping students succeed academically and otherwise. Necessary to that success is good communication. We believe parents must be well informed about their child's progress and development in school. Only then can parents and teachers work cooperatively. Expect to hear from us often.

Stephen Decatur Middle School enjoys the commitment and involvement of parents. We expect parents to support their child's enthusiasm for school success. Please do not hesitate to contact teachers when you think there is a problem or to review your child's progress. Participate in your child's education and you'll find it amazingly rewarding.

Finally, please remember that learning is fun, and you can't learn everything to be successful in life from books. You must learn about the world of work setting goals for success how to get along with others and how to become more independent by solving problems by yourself. In short we are here to help you learn to become a successful adult one who will enjoy learning throughout your lifetime.

Sincerely,

The Faculty and Staff of Stephen Decatur Middle School

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Worcester County Northern Schools a diverse and growing community is to provide a rigorous sequential and balanced curriculum for all students to become lifelong learners. This will be accomplished through instructional excellence in partnership with family and community in a safe, caring, and well-maintained environment. We will recognize the uniqueness of each student's role as a productive citizen in an ever- changing world.

We believe that:

our students are unique in their needs thought processes learning styles and are motivated in different ways.

the student, family, educators, and community must be involved in the educational process.

every child wants to succeed can succeed and is accountable for his or her success.

all students are entitled to a socially emotionally, and physically safe learning environment.

consistent rules and discipline positive values and social skills are necessary for all individuals.

self-respect and a positive self-image are critical for a successful transition to adulthood.

an integrated curriculum using a team approach best meets the needs of the whole child.

it is important to accept and respect each student and teacher as an individual of worth and dignity, and to celebrate differences and encourage creativity and freedom of expression.

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## People to Help You

There are many people at SDMS to help you through your daily routine and to help you solve problems when they arise. Below is a list of those persons available to help. Do not hesitate to ask any teacher for help when you need it.

**Mrs. Woodley** - The school nurse. Mrs. Woodley is always available to give aid and comfort to sick or injured students. If necessary she will contact parents. She will also help administer special medications. You will find her in the health suite off the main hall. When Mrs. Woodley is not available students with health-related problems should report to the main office.

**Mrs. Ashley Smith, Mrs. Weller, and Mrs. Bosche'** – The Administrative Assistant, Front Office Secretary, and Business Manager. These ladies work in the main office and are usually the first school personnel to greet visitors. They help with everything from attendance to lost-and-found items to issuing late passes. If you have any questions about school please see one of them as they are extremely helpful.

**Mrs. Zanowic and Mrs. Townsend** - The school guidance counselors. Mrs. Zanowic and Mrs. Townsend can help you with special problems. They are trained to help you deal with personal problems, such as trouble with a friend as well as school problems like getting along with teachers or learning how to budget your study time. Counselors can help you with any academic problems you may be having as well. Their offices are in the guidance suite behind the main office. You may make an appointment to see a counselor with the guidance secretary, **Mrs. Winte'**.

**Mrs. Brown** - The media specialist. The media center is in the heart of the building adjacent to the courtyard. Mrs. Brown will be glad to help you find an interesting book, do research on a particular topic help you prepare for a book conference, or find information for a project. The media center is open after school, or you may visit during your lunch shift.

**Mr. Young** - The head custodian. Mr. Young and the other custodians keep our school neat and clean. You will see him everywhere. He can help with jammed locker doors or lost-and-found items. You can help Mr. Young and all custodians by picking up trash and keeping your space and restrooms neat.

**Mrs. Fenoglietto** - The curriculum and testing coordinator. Mrs. Fenoglietto helps teachers and students with curricula and the extensive state and county testing program. She is also responsible for helping teachers and staff implement the annual school improvement plan. Mrs. Fenoglietto maintains contact with students by assuming responsibility for many special student activities. She will be glad to help you with any school problem.

**Ms. Dillon** - The school psychologist. Ms. Dillon visits our school one day a week to help students with testing. Parents who wish to contact Ms. Dillon may do so by calling the school office at 410-632-3400.

**Mrs. Westbrook** - The ELL or English language learner's teacher. Mrs. Westbrook's job is to assist students whose primary language is other than English. Her office is in room M3. However, she spends most of her day in academic classrooms helping the included ELL students.

**Educational Assistants** - SDMS is fortunate to have several educational assistants assigned to each team. Their job is to assist students and teachers in the classroom. They will be introduced to you early in the school year. Please do not hesitate to ask them for assistance. You will find them to be most helpful.

**Mr. Shockley** - The educational assistant in charge of in-school suspension. Mr. Shockley works very closely with those students assigned to in-school suspension. He monitors their attendance and makes

sure they follow all the rules associated with in-school suspension.

**Mrs. Torpey** - An assistant principal. Mrs. Torpey is the assistant principal primarily responsible for developing and coordinating the extensive after school academy summer classes and other activities for students. She is always available to discuss these opportunities with parents and students and remains in the building until 5:30 p.m. when the after-school academy/program is operating.

**Mr. Shipley** - An assistant principal. Mr. Shipley helps many people. He is primarily responsible for helping students adjust to SDMS by helping them to get along with teachers and fellow students. He is also responsible for building maintenance, fire/security drills lockers and school buses. Mr. Shipley is always in the main lobby or cafeteria before school and dismisses the busses in the afternoon. You may speak with Mr. Shipley at any time or set up an appointment with one of the secretaries in the main office.

**Mrs. Barton** - The principal. Mrs. Barton is always available to help students solve problems. Mrs. Barton, Mr. Shipley, and Mrs. Torpey subscribe to an open-door policy. This means their doors are always open if you need to see them. If they are busy at the time tell one of the secretaries and you will be called from class when they become available. Mrs. Barton is always in the cafetorium before school on bus duty immediately after school, and present during most lunch shifts.

### **Traveling to and from SDMS**

If you ride a bus to school please note the following:

1. In the morning make sure you are at the proper location in plenty of time to be picked up.
2. Know your bus number and your bus driver's name.
3. Occasionally your bus driver will tell you in the morning to ride a different bus in the afternoon. Make a note of that bus number!
4. Your bus will arrive at SDMS between 7:20 a.m. and 7:30 a.m.
5. The school day will end with a bell at 2:35 p.m. Know the location of your bus on the parking lot. It will be in the same location every day. For safety concerns we ask that you go directly to your bus!
6. Students **MAY NOT** voluntarily ride home with the parent of a friend or **MAY NOT** leave school grounds without written permission from a parent. SDMS cannot be responsible for the safety of a child who leaves school grounds without written parental permission or the knowledge of the school.
7. Students **MUST** follow the bus rules.

### **Bus Rules**

ALWAYS follow directions given by the driver who is responsible for your safety. If a street **MUST BE CROSSED**, stand 10 feet in front of the school bus, and wait until the driver indicates by P.A. System that it is safe to cross! Students must **NOT** cross divided highways!!

1. **PLEASE BE AT YOUR BUS STOP FIVE (5) MINUTES EARLY. The bus cannot & will not wait for late students.**
2. All riders will be **ASSIGNED** a bus. Stops are designated by the **SUPERVISOR OF TRANSPORTATION.**
3. Riders must get on/off at their assigned stop. If you wish to get on/off at any other stop, a request in writing from a parent must be approved by a school administrator.
4. During bus evacuation drills or emergency evacuations
5. **FOLLOW DIRECTIONS GIVEN BY THE BUS DRIVERS AND STUDENT HELPERS.**
6. **DO NOT STAND OR PLAY IN ROADWAY WHILE WAITING FOR THE BUS.**
7. **REMAIN SEATED AT ALL TIMES. DO NOT EXTEND ARMS OR HEADS FROM**

## WINDOWS!

8. No objects shall be thrown out the windows.
9. For your safety, eating or drinking is not allowed on the bus. Food and drinks should be kept in a lunchbox and/or brown bag. Pencils crayons and any other pointed objects needed for school must be kept in book bags or notebook.
10. Large items such as band instruments, cannot be put in aisles or under seats. They must be held.
11. All riders will be assigned a seat by the bus driver. Students will be responsible for maintaining the assigned seat. Students who intentionally damage the bus will be subject to disciplinary action and will be required to pay for all damages.

## **THE PRIVILEGE OF RIDING THE BUS WILL BE DENIED TO THOSE WHOSE BEHAVIOR JEOPARDIZES THE SAFE OPERATION OF THE BUS OR INFRINGES ON THE RIGHTS OF OTHER STUDENTS ON THE BUS.**

1. If you do not ride a bus to school **PLEASE DO NOT ARRIVE BEFORE 7:15 a.m.** The school cannot be responsible for the safety and welfare of students dropped off before 7:15 a.m. as sufficient staff to supervise students before 7:15 a.m. is not present.
2. If you are picking your child up after dismissal, please be waiting or arrive as close to dismissal time as possible. **Students waiting outside for a ride after school are not supervised.**
3. If you know you are going to be late, call school ahead of time and have your child wait for you in the main office.
4. If the opening of school is delayed for any reason **DO NOT DROP YOUR CHILD OFF AT THE USUAL TIME EXPECTING ADEQUATE SUPERVISION.** Staff will not be present to do so. Also, depending on the arrival time of custodians when opening is delayed, the front doors may be locked.
5. Follow your local news channels for information and make sure your phone number is current and updated for the board of education automated phone calls.

### **Arrival / Departure**

1. All students must enter the building upon arrival to school.
2. Upon entering the main doors all students are to proceed directly to their Block 1 classroom and remain there until the 7:35 bell.
3. Students are **not** permitted to go anywhere on school grounds except the main building while waiting for school to begin.
4. Students are **never** permitted to leave school property after arrival. Once a student sets foot on school property she or he becomes the responsibility of school authorities. The school cannot assume responsibility if the student chooses to leave school grounds.
5. The school day will end with a bell at 2:35 p.m. Exit the building as soon as possible unless you are remaining for an after-school activity. Do not run between parked or moving buses.
6. During inclement weather students riding late buses may wait in the main entrance hall for their bus to arrive.
7. If you miss your bus ride home tell an administrator a secretary or any teacher **immediately.** They will help you make arrangements to get home. **Do not make arrangements by yourself.**

### **Late Arrival or Early Departure**

1. Upon late arrival, go directly to the main office and sign in to avoid being marked absent for the day.
2. If you are late from a visit to a physician or dentist, present a note to the school secretary.

3. To leave school early you must bring a note that morning written and signed by a parent or guardian stating the reason and time of your early departure.
4. Present the note to the school secretary.
5. When it is time for you to leave **you will be called to the main office.**
6. Under no circumstances should you leave school without informing the main office.
7. Students will not be released into the custody of siblings or non-custodial relatives without written permission of the custodial parent or guardian.
8. Students will not be released into the custody of non-custodial parents, friends, or neighbors.

If a student remains after school for tutoring, or for any approved activity, he or she may use the office telephones to call for transportation. Students may wait in the office or in the main foyer. Students without a way home should tell an adult immediately.

On extremely rare occasions a student may leave the campus without school or parental permission. When this occurs the school attempts to notify a parent or guardian and notifies local police agencies. Clearly the school cannot be responsible for the safety or welfare of an AWOL student but will make every effort to assist those persons involved in the search.

### **Late to School**

Students are expected to arrive at school on time. That's between the time of 7:20 am and 7:30 am. We do have a lateness policy to make students accountable, to teach them responsibility and punctuality and to deter lateness.

If a bus arrives late, a general announcement will be issued over the public address system. This is an automatic excused lateness. Notes or passes will not be issued.

If a student is late to school for any other reason except medical, e.g., overslept, missed the bus family problem car mechanical problem, that lateness is unexcused. The office will issue an unexcused late pass. The only acceptable excuses for being late to school are medical or dental appointments with a note from the doctor or dentist, and bus delays. **Riding the school bus every day guarantees arriving on time.**

### **Late to Class**

If a student is late to class for any reason he or she must produce a note from the releasing personnel. It is the student's responsibility to request a note. Late arrivals without a note are unexcused.

### **Resolution of Lateness**

Students are given warnings for the first two unexcused latenesses to school or class per teacher per quarter. Upon the third unexcused lateness the student may be assigned a lunch detention. Should the student be late without an excuse a fourth time, an after-school detention may be assigned. Please be on time so these consequences are not necessary.

### **Absence from School**

Success in school depends on regular attendance. Therefore, we expect students to come to school every day. We understand that occasionally it might not be possible due to illness or some other extenuating circumstance beyond the student's control. On those occasions upon returning to school students must bring a note to their homeroom teacher explaining the absence and signed by a parent or guardian. After repeated absence a letter will be sent to the home notifying parents of state law regarding responsibility for attendance and the possible fine. Chronic absenteeism may result in a visit to Truancy Court Do not miss school for

frivolous reasons like shopping or attending a sporting event. Regular attendance and punctuality are very important.

### **What to Bring Everyday**

Successful students are prepared students. This means bringing the necessary supplies to school every day. All students receive a list of school supplies from their team teachers in a letter mailed during August or open enrollment. Students are not required to wear a gym uniform for physical education, but they may want to bring a change of clothes. These extra clothes can be kept in their gym locker or backpack. Additionally, your fully charged iPad and crayon are essential for your classes every day.

### **What Not to Bring**

Some items do not belong in a school for obvious reasons and may be confiscated. Moreover, school personnel may not make an effort depending on the circumstances; to recover any of these items should they be lost or stolen. The following are examples of what not to bring:

1. expensive watches or jewelry
2. toys or sports gear of any kind, including electronic games or laser pointers
3. a pocketknife or weapon of any kind
4. valuable card sports cards
5. candy or chewing gum
6. large sums of money
7. cologne perfume hair coloring/dye body spray etc.

### **Electronic Devices**

It is best not to bring personal electronic devices to school. However, students who choose to do so may use them (except cell phones) before school and after school. Be advised that the school will not attempt to recover any lost or stolen personal electronic device. Students use them at their own risk. Students are not to bring digital files, videos, or any electronic device that contains inappropriate content. In addition, students may not record (video or audio) any person.

### **What Not to Send**

Parents, relatives, and friends are eager to celebrate birthdays, Valentine's Day, and other holidays by sending children gifts and other special items to them at school. This creates distraction and would better be left for home. Please do not send flowers or balloons to celebrate special days/events and please do not send pizza for a pizza party with friends at lunch.

### **Where to Place the Items You Bring**

Students may carry a bookbag for keeping supplies and personal items. Students will be issued a locker for use throughout the school year to hold their personal belongings while in class. They will be given time between classes to go to their lockers to switch out classroom materials.

### **Student Dress Code**

The dress code is designed to allow for individual expression within reasonable limits. The dress code is not intended to infringe upon the constitutional or statutory rights of any student. School clothing and/or hair styles/coloring should not create distractions or issues of decorum that detract from learning. Students are expected to wear clothing that is neat and clean. Simple, modest, and durable clothing is the most suitable. Clothing, hair arrangements, or other personal adornments or embellishments that create distraction or interfere with normal school operations are prohibited.

Please observe the following:

1. Winter coats hats, visors hoods, and sunglasses may not be worn in the building.
2. Any clothing with inappropriate slogans or sayings is unacceptable. Clothing that advertises alcoholic beverages, bars cigarettes or drugs is unacceptable.
3. All clothing must be size-appropriate. No oversized excessively baggy, or exceptionally tight-fitting apparel is acceptable. Wearing apparel that causes underwear or cleavage to be exposed is unacceptable. **Pants may not sag below the waist and must be worn with a belt.**
4. Tank tops tube tops spaghetti strap tops or dresses, men's sleeveless shirts, bare midriffs pajamas are not acceptable nor is any clothing of mesh transparent or fishnet material.
5. **Skirts, dresses, and shorts must be worn fingertip-length or longer (use your longest finger as a ruler). Ripped or torn jeans (and skirts or shorts) follow the same fingertip rule for rips.**
6. Leggings and yoga pants *are* permitted with a shirt or top that is thigh length or lower.
7. Heavy chains may not be worn as jewelry or to secure a wallet.
8. Headgear, hats, or hoodies of any sort may not be worn in school.
9. Clothing with gang related symbols or colors are unacceptable.

### **Health Services**

The school nurse Mrs. Woodley assumes all health-related duties in our school including the primary role of medical emergencies. If a child becomes ill or injured during the day Mrs. Woodley will call for the parent/guardian to have the child picked up if needed. A student is NOT to call home directly without the knowledge of school personnel. If your child has a special health problem Mrs. Woodley must be informed of the particulars.

Mrs. Woodley or any school personnel cannot provide medication even aspirin, to students. Prescription medication can be administered only if the medicine is brought to school in the original container with the student's name and dosage appearing on the container. A physician's order must accompany the medicine and be signed by the physician. All medicine must be stored in the health suite except for inhalers. Mrs. Woodley maintains health emergency information for every student in the form of a pink form completed by parents. Please make sure the information on this form is accurate and updated when necessary. If you have any questions about student health services Family Life Education or health related problems please call Mrs. Woodley at 410.632-5000 ext. 3409.

### **School Organization and Schedule**

SDMS is organized into eight teaching teams four per grade. Students are assigned to a team and all students on that team share the same teachers. Each team is comprised of approximately 85 students five teachers (math ILA science social studies special education) and one educational assistant.

Team teachers have a common planning period every other day during which they discuss their students' group and individual needs meet with parents or students determine schedules decide how to involve special staff/faculty plan field trips and projects plan for remediation and enrichment and generally help students with academics and adjustment to middle school.

### **Classes and Subjects**

All students receive the same academic program each year: mathematics integrated language arts or ILA social studies and science. In addition, every student also takes physical education and special classes. Students are assigned to teams heterogeneously. Throughout their experience students are exposed to a variety of specials classes such as band, chorus, drama, technology education, art, exploratory foreign language, and health. Students who have not demonstrated satisfactory progress in reading or math may be assigned to an intervention class or program as one of their special's classes.

Band, chorus, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade musical drama are performing arts. As such students in these classes are **required** to attend rehearsals and performances. Failure to attend performances may result in a failing grade! If you know you will not be able to attend these after school hours and/or evening performances or if religion places some restriction on performing notify your instructor when the school year begins. As a result, your schedule may be changed. **Please do not request a schedule change based on class, teacher, friends, or team preference. It will not be granted. Schedule changes are rarely granted by the principal and for compelling reasons only.**

All school curricula are prescribed by the Maryland State Department of Education. To learn more about the curricula and teacher/team expectations contact the curriculum coordinators or our curriculum resource teacher for more information.

### **State and Local Testing**

All students are required to take state accountability tests in mathematics and reading. Eighth graders are also assessed in social studies and science. These tests are administered throughout the year. SDMS also requires all students to take end of course assessments in math ILA science and social studies. Assessments are administered the last two days of school and not before. It is very important to be present the last two days of the school! Be advised that the last two days of school may not be determined until after missed school days due to the weather have been added or removed from the school calendar.

Complying with state testing policy students in possession of a personal electronic device such as a cell phone during the administration of a state test will be removed from the testing room and their test will be considered invalid. They will not be given the opportunity to retake the test. The same is true for students causing a disruption during testing or those refusing to be tested.

### **Textbooks / Library Books / iPads**

Students may be issued textbooks in academic classes and in some special's classes. Every student has been issued an iPad crayon and charger. Students are also entitled to borrow books from the media center. It is the responsibility of the student to safeguard his/her textbooks library books and iPad. Lost stolen or damaged textbooks library books or iPad and accessories must be paid for by the student or report cards will not be issued and records may not be forwarded.

### **Enrichment/Remediation Opportunities**

To best meet the needs of all students SDMS establishes opportunities for enrichment and/or remediation. Additionally, students may take advantage of the many enrichment opportunities offered through our After School Academy. Contact Mrs. Torpey for details. Additionally, SDMS offers very specific remedial reading and math opportunities in both grades. Contact the curriculum resource teacher Mrs. Fenoglietto for more information regarding the offerings.

### **Special Education Services**

Complying with special education law SDMS subscribes to the policy of least restrictive environment for students with special needs. To that end SDMS embraces a full inclusion policy; there are no permanent special education classes or classrooms. Each team is assigned a special education teacher and an educational assistant who works under the supervision of the special education teacher. Together and working with the rest of the teaching team they provide special services to all children on the team through individual support and regrouping on an "as needed" basis in compliance with a student's IEP.

### **Grades and Grade Reports**

SDMS issues report cards at the end of every quarter. Mid-term reports are issued mid-quarter. Parents with internet service can access the student information management system, known as PowerSchool and view

student course grades anytime including graded assignments. To gain access, parents must bring photo identification to the guidance office to receive their password and login instructions. This password is valid for a child's entire Worcester County education. In addition, teachers and counselors also issue informal reports and/or periodic computerized grade slips. Parents are encouraged to contact teachers or a counselor whenever they wish more information about their child's progress.

### **Honor Roll**

Students who have distinguished themselves academically by earning top grades are considered honor students and are listed on the quarterly honor roll. To be included on the honor roll a student must have a grade point average of 3.5 or better and no Cs on report cards. To calculate a grade point average, count each A as a 4.0 each B as a 3.0 each C as a 2.0, and each D as a 1.0. **Students must have a satisfactory attendance rate of 94%.**

### **Principal's List**

To be placed on the Principal's List, students must earn As in all courses. **Students must have a satisfactory attendance rate of 94%.**

### **Student Government Association**

The SGA is an organization run by and for the students at Stephen Decatur Middle School. The purpose of SGA is to give students an opportunity to participate in the decision and policy making process and learn about the workings of a democratic government. In early fall students have an opportunity to join. The student government meets once a month to discuss school matters plan special events and hold workshops. If you think you are interested in serving student government, see one of the faculty advisors.

### **National Junior Honor Society**

Membership in the NJHS is an honor granted to a seventh or eighth grader by the faculty based on outstanding scholarship character service to school leadership, and citizenship. Students do not apply for membership. Interested students are required to complete a Student Activity Information Form. These forms usually become available in January and are to be completed by the student not a parent. Availability of forms is advertised on the morning and afternoon announcements. Flyer's advertising NJHS **will not** be sent home. It is **the student's responsibility to obtain and complete this form by the advertised deadline. Exceptions will not be granted.** Before being considered a candidate for NIBS a student must have a cumulative scholastic average of 3.5 (on a four-point scale) and a clean disciplinary record. Every student submitting a form is then evaluated by his or her teachers in the areas of service leadership character and citizenship. These teacher evaluations are an integral part of the selection process. Membership is granted by a majority vote of the Faculty Council. Students and parents interested in additional information about the NIBS and the NHS including the goals and purpose, should consult the Parent Zone on the NHS/NJHS website [nhs.us/parentzone](http://nhs.us/parentzone). Again, it is the student's responsibility to observe all notices and due dates associated with the selection process. The date of the N J H S Induction Ceremony (usually mid-March) is published in September and placed on the master calendar.

**Specific information regarding the selection of individual students is strictly confidential and will not be shared with parents or students.**

The following guidelines are used by the faculty to determine candidates for the NJHS.

The student who exercises leadership:

- is resourceful in proposing new problems applying principles and making suggestions
- demonstrates leadership in promoting school activities
- exercises influence on peers in upholding school ideals
- contributes ideas that improve the school
- can delegate responsibilities
- exemplifies positive attitudes
- inspires positive behavior in others

- demonstrates academic initiative
- successfully holds school offices or positions of responsibility
- demonstrates reliability and dependability
- demonstrates leadership in the classroom at work in school or community

**The student who serves:**

- is willing to uphold scholarship and maintain a loyal school attitude
- participates in some outside activity
- volunteers dependable and well-organized assistance
- is gladly available to sacrifice and render assistance
- works well with others and is willing to take on difficult or inconspicuous responsibilities
- performs committee and staff work without complaining
- shows courtesy by assisting visitors, teachers, and other students

**The student of character:**

- takes criticism willingly and accepts recommendations graciously
- consistently exemplifies desirable qualities of behavior
- upholds principles of morality and ethics
- cooperates by complying with school regulations concerning property programs office halls etc.
- demonstrates the highest standards of honesty and reliability
- shows courtesy concern and respect for others
- observes instructions and rules punctuality and faithfulness outside and inside the classroom
- has powers of concentration and sustained attention as shown by perseverance to studies
- manifests truthfulness in acknowledging obedience to rules and avoiding cheating
- shows an unwillingness to profit by the mistakes of others
- actively helps rid the school of bad influences or environment

**The student who demonstrates citizenship:**

- understands the importance of civic involvement
- has a high regard for freedom justice and respect of the American form of government
- demonstrates mature participation and responsibility through involvement in civic organizations

## **Counseling Services**

Stephen Decatur Middle School has two full-time counselors and a secretary to help students with a wide range of problems including academics, social adjustment abuse, family relationships, and thoughts about suicide. Expect your child to meet with his or her counselor at least once a year. Additionally, the Worcester County Health Department assigns mental health workers to our school to see clients on a regular basis. Typically, our counselors work closely with and refer students and parents to Youth and Family Counseling, Chesapeake Counseling, and other social agencies. Students may schedule an appointment with a counselor by visiting the counseling secretary.

## **Lunchtime**

All students eat lunch with their team. There are approximately 160 students per each of the four lunch shifts. Students have approximately 25 minutes for lunch. This includes travel time, obtaining lunch and clean up. We encourage students to socialize and enjoy the company of your friends while eating lunch. We also expect students to exhibit good manners. Students may bring lunch from home or buy lunch in the cafeteria.

## **Cafeteria Rules and Procedures**

Students are assigned to a cafeteria table. Students may sit at any seat at the assigned table. This is their permanent table. Students must remain seated at that table for the entire lunch shift. Students are not permitted to table hop because students who table hop tend to leave their trash behind. The students at each table are responsible for the cleanliness of their table and surrounding area. Seating may be reassigned by the cafeteria monitor or an administrator at any time.

Upon arrival, students are to go to their table and wait for the cafeteria monitor to release those students purchasing lunch by rows. This permits fair and quick access to food lines. During lunch if a student wants to return to the food line purchase a drink from a vending machine or visit the restroom he or she needs to raise their hand and be recognized by the monitor before leaving their seat.

At the end of the lunch shift students will be dismissed by table and instructed to take their trays to the wash window or cart. Disposable trays and other trash should be discarded in trash cans provided at the front and rear of the cafeteria. Do not discard trash or trays before being told to do so. After discarding trash and/or returning trays students should leave the cafeteria. Students are not to leave the cafeteria before being dismissed by the cafeteria monitor and may not leave while eating.

When in the cafeteria for lunch, **students should:**

- know their numeric code if purchasing cafeteria food
- refrain from running to the food line
- fall in line at the rear of the line, never break into the line
- be courteous to the food servers
- pick up anything dropped, e.g., food, napkins, wrappers, etc.
- not play with food or drink or their containers or build food/trash sculptures
- never touch or take another student's food or drink
- never throw food or flick food bits or trash
- refrain from pounding on the tables, popping containers, or creating a distraction
- refrain from horseplay and/or touching other students
- talk using normal conversational volume, not yell or scream
- leave their table and surrounding floor free of trash
- not take food or drink to other areas of the building that includes hallways
- raise hand and be recognized to obtain a snack, drink, or use the restroom
- remain at their table throughout lunch

Students who violate any of the above will be assigned lunch detention or one day of in-school suspension. **There will be no warnings!** This may seem a harsh consequence but is necessary for a calm orderly and enjoyable lunchtime.

## **Telephone Usage**

Occasionally a student may have to call home or a parent's place of work. Students may use the office telephone on these occasions but must obtain permission from school personnel. Be assured that students will be given permission to use phones when warranted. Students are not to use a cell phone to contact parents during the school day.

## **Cell Phones**

**As soon as you enter the school building:**

**Phones must be powered off by 7:30 am and be stored for the entire school day!**

- Cell phones may NOT be used during lunch or in a bathroom.

- Cell phones may not be used in the classroom.
- They may not be used on a school bus or chartered bus without authorization.
- If causing a disruption or used at an inappropriate time cell phones may be confiscated.
- Confiscated phones will be returned to parents only.
- The school will not be responsible for the theft or damage of cell phones.
- The school will not attempt to recover cell phones if lost or stolen.

These rules may seem harsh however with all the controversy that can be caused by social media we feel it is necessary to enforce these strict rules so students can concentrate on learning and achieve academic success in the classroom.

Parents, please do not attempt to contact your child via their cell phone. In case of an emergency please call the main office at 410-632-3400/3401.

### **Lost and Found**

The lost and found bin is in the main office. See one of the office secretaries to recover lost items or to turn in a found item.

### **Hallway Traffic Routine**

Hallway traffic should flow smoothly during change of classes. This routine is simple: all traffic must keep to the right side of the hallway; students must go around hall monitors (teachers) instead of cutting corners; students must take the shortest path to their next class; running, horseplay, pushing or shoving is strictly forbidden; conversational noise must be kept to acceptable levels. Do not disturb classes that are in session. Wait patiently at congested intersections.

Most students have three minutes to get to their next class. There is not always a late bell. Students late to class must have a valid written pass or the lateness will be unexcused. Occasionally it will be necessary for you to travel the halls during class time e.g., to go to the restroom or visit your locker. On these occasions you will be issued a hall pass by your classroom teacher. Hall passes are issued on an "as needed" basis. Please do not abuse this privilege.

### **Student Behavior**

For our school to run smoothly it is necessary for everyone to follow some simple rules and exhibit courteous behavior. These expectations are designed to reinforce mutual respect and understanding. Please:

1. Be in class on time. This means being in your seat and prepared for instruction before class begins. There may not always be a late bell. It is the student's responsibility to be punctual.
2. Treat everyone, teachers staff members, and classmates with respect.
3. Be always polite. Do not speak while others are speaking and raise your hand to be recognized before speaking.
4. Refrain from touching your classmates. Do not push poke, trip slap or in any way make physical contact with another student, even if "only playing." Physical contact and/or horseplay may result in disciplinary action.
5. Do not chew gum anywhere in the building.

### **Student Misbehavior**

Occasionally students misbehave. When that happens, SDMS initiates a positive discipline policy i.e. one that attempts to permanently change negative behaviors through education and counseling. After all, "to discipline" means "to teach " not punish. Our goal is to teach students lasting self-discipline. Offenses that disrupt the orderly educational progress of others will be dealt with according to Worcester

County Board of Education Policy.

Students should realize that any inappropriate language, gestures, or writing (**including e-mail and postings/messages on social networking websites such as Facebook, Snapchat, YouTube, etc.**), directed toward a school employee volunteer, or student intern will result in disciplinary action.

Students who must be referred to the main office or who are assigned to the alternative education classroom for disciplinary action may be denied certain privileges such as but not limited to participation in performances and/or special events.

Students who cheat including plagiarism may suffer a wide range of consequences including but not limited to loss of membership in school organizations loss of credit loss of special privileges and severe disciplinary action. Students who permit others to copy from them will also be disciplined.

In the winter months there may be snow on the ground during the school day. This presents a temptation for some students to throw snowballs etc. Be advised that students are OT to touch snow as they travel between classes or wait for buses. Students who do so may be subject to disciplinary action. There will be a general warning/reminder in the morning announcement. However, there will not be individual warnings.

### **Referral Process**

Teachers are expected to make every effort to keep students in the classroom engaged in activities and in classroom instruction. If a student is off task or disrupts the learning process of others, the teacher will give the student a warning. If the warning does not help the student get back on task, a parent may be contacted. If this does not improve the student's classroom behavior, the student may be sent to the office with an office discipline referral. A copy of the referral will be sent home for the parents to sign. If your child receives an office referral please take time to discuss proper school behavior with your child. Please feel free to communicate with your child's teacher so we can together help eliminate poor classroom behavior.

### **Consequences for Discipline Referrals**

Consequences for discipline referrals can result in lunch detention, after school detention, all day In School Suspension (ISS) or Saturday School. We have high expectations for student behavior at Stephen Decatur Middle School and when those high expectations are not met, consequences will be administered. Consequences are only given to students in hopes to change the student's behavior. Our goal is to work together with the parents. With this partnership, we feel we can bring the best out of "our" students. Please feel free to stop by school or call Mark Shipley if you should have any questions or concerns with student discipline.

### **Harassment/Bullying/Intimidation**

State law requires that each county establish a policy prohibiting bullying harassment or intimidation at school. The Worcester County Board of Education is committed to providing a safe nurturing respectful educational environment where the worth and dignity of all individuals are protected. Behaviors that compromise such an environment interfere with school operations or are otherwise contrary to the mission of WCPS will not be tolerated.

Harassment exists when there is sufficiently severe action or a persistent pattern of actions or statements over time directed at an identifiable individual or group which a reasonable person would perceive as ridiculing demeaning or threatening. Harassment is defined as inappropriate verbal, written, or physical conduct directed toward persons based upon sex, age, religion, race, national norm physical characteristics or disability that occurs under any of the following circumstances:

1. when submission to such conduct is made explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of educational development, academic status, or participation in other school activities; or
2. when such conduct has the effect of unreasonably interfering with the student's academic performance by creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive learning environment

Forms of harassment may include but are not limited to the following:

1. derogatory or offensive comments jokes, slurs, or gossip.
2. inappropriate touching impeding or blocking movement.
3. offensive writing posters pictures objects cards cartoons, graffiti drawings, gestures or prolonged staring or leering.
4. hazing, bullying and/or teasing.

Harassment committed by students against students constitutes inappropriate behavior. The principal or designee will investigate all allegations. Depending on the severity of the offense appropriate disciplinary action will be taken.

The principal or designee will investigate of an alleged incident in a timely manner. The principal or designee will determine whether the allegations have been substantiated and the complainant informed of the finding.

Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible. The identity of the complainant, the subject, and witnesses will be protected to the extent possible.

Students who think they are victims of any form of harassment bullying or intimidation are urged to report the behaviors to their counselor, a teacher, or an administrator. It is not the victim's responsibility to prove they have been harassed. It is the school's responsibility to investigate all reports. **Parents who suspect their child is being harassed, bullied, or intimidated are urged to contact school immediately.** Do not wait; hoping the problem will go away.

### **Internet Harassment**

Some students have been known to engage in online/electronic harassment or cyberbullying most of which does not occur during school hours. The school will make every attempt to halt this form of harassment if it occurs during school hours. An example would be harassing via illegal text messaging - illegal because cell phones cannot be used by students during school hours. However, the school will not investigate online harassment that occurs outside of school. These incidents should be reported to the local police department for investigation.

### **In School Suspension**

Students who require removal from the classroom for inappropriate behavior may be assigned a day or more of in school suspension (ISS). This means the student will spend the day including lunchtime, in the ISS classroom monitored by Mr. Shockley. During their stay the student will complete schoolwork assigned by their team teachers. While the ISS student will not benefit from normal classroom interaction the student will complete the same class work in all major subjects as their peers preventing them from falling behind. In the event an assessment is scheduled for the assigned day the student may be released to take the assessment, or the student will be entitled to take a make-up assessment without penalty.

### **Help Sessions/Make-Up Work**

Special remediation classes during the after-school program sessions affording students bus transportation are offered. All students are given an opportunity to make up missed work/assignments due to absenteeism lateness suspension rehearsal vacation or a special event regardless of when the assignment or project due date was announced. **Upon returning to school/class, it is the student's responsibility to determine missed assignments and complete them in a timely fashion.**

## After School Activities

SDMS offers an extended school day program for students in the After School Academy. These after school classes have a strong reading and math component in challenging and enriching courses of interest to students. Classes operate for eight weeks three times per year. Transportation is offered for academy attendees. Check our website about ASA class offerings.

While we encourage students to take advantage of these many opportunities students are not permitted to remain after school unsupervised e.g., simply loitering, hanging out, or waiting for a friend. For safety and liability reasons we cannot permit unsupervised students roaming the building or grounds after school hours.

## Field Trips

Field trips are educational experiences that occur away from the school campus. Teaching teams clubs service organizations and the physical education and music departments sponsor field trips in a typical school year. School Board policy requires students to obtain parental permission usually a standard form signed by a parent or guardian and returned to school before they may attend. The exception to this policy is a trip to Stephen Decatur High School as students never leave Board of Education property. Occasionally there is a fee associated with a field trip to pay for or defray the cost of transportation. In the event of late cancellation due to weather or some other factor beyond school control there will be no refund if the transportation company does not refund the school. Students will not be denied attendance on a field trip because of inability to pay. Usually, parents volunteer to serve as additional chaperons on field trips. Students who lack self-discipline and/or who have a record of inappropriate behavior may be required to provide personal chaperones i.e., a parent grandparent or other responsible adult to accompany that child on the trip. This ensures appropriate behavior without denying the child the educational experience. Parents are reminded to be at school at the specified time to pick up their child after a field trip. Students will not be taken home by teachers, nor will students be left alone to wait.

## SDMS Expectations

Everyone develops certain expectations when encountering new situations. School is no exception. You expect SDMS to provide a safe and orderly learning environment; a place where you can learn and develop your talents and special skills. You can expect the faculty to deliver quality instruction with a caring and responsible attitude. You can expect schoolwork to become more rigorous in middle school. You can expect to make lots of new friends and enjoy much socialization.

Likewise, we expect certain behaviors from our students. We expect students to come to school every day prepared and on time. Students should be courteous friendly and helpful. When problems develop as they surely will we expect students to solve them in a constructive manner and to get help from teachers and staff when necessary. We expect students to be very serious about their schooling because education is a very serious business.

We appreciate the involvement of parents in their child's education. Because the spectrum of involvement is very broad, we have suggested some ways parents can support their children and the school.

1. Maintain channels of communication. Please call school when you feel there is a problem. SDMS takes pride in maintaining excellent parent-school communications but we're not perfect. At times it may be necessary for you to initiate contact. Counselors are an excellent point of contact.
2. Frequently talk with your child about what happens in school. To learn details, ask specific questions: "What book are you reading in ILA? Did you do any experiments in science? What sport are you playing in PE? Who did you sit with during lunch? How do you like your math class?"
3. Show an interest in home assignments and tests. Review completed home assignments. Offer to help

with assignments or projects when appropriate. When your child has an upcoming test, make sure she or he gets plenty of rest. Review graded tests and assignments. Discuss strategies for improvement if necessary.

4. Discuss progress reports with your child. When a report card or interim report comes home spend some time discussing the results. Find out why your child received certain grades. If you and your child are not satisfied, discuss ways of improving progress. Get the necessary people involved especially your child's counselor.
5. Celebrate successes. As the most important adult in your child's life, your evaluation is critical. When your child does well, let her or him know you are proud. A simple, "That's great," goes a long way toward building self-esteem and confidence. Don't dwell on the not-so-successful performances. Try not to celebrate a "B" performance by asking why they didn't get an "A." A "B" or "C" performance does not make a student a failure if they are maximizing their potential.
6. Plan educational goals with your child. Convince him or her that a good education is the key to future options. Discuss college and career interests and the prerequisites. Help your child develop a serious attitude about school.

### **Conferences**

Parent-teacher conference days are scheduled throughout the school year. Conference times are from 5:00p.m. until 7:00p.m. Please check the school's website for a list of these important dates. The first date is in mid-October. Parents may schedule individual or team conferences by calling school and asking for a member of their child's teaching team or a counselor.

### **Insurance**

School accident insurance brochures and applications are distributed to students at the beginning of the school year. When considering purchasing this insurance parents should be advised that schools and/or the Board of Education do **not** carry insurance to cover/pay for school related injuries. Given the high cost of treating accidental injuries parents are strongly encouraged to purchase this insurance. **If** you do not receive this material, contact the school nurse, Mrs. Woodley.

### **Fundraising**

Teams various school organizations and clubs may conduct fundraising opportunities throughout the school year. These funds are used to supplement or defray the costs of special projects such as a field trip. Students are prohibited from door-to-door selling and will never be asked to do so. Be advised that your child is **not** required to participate in any fundraising venture. Participation is strictly voluntary.

**General Information**

School Day: 7:35 a.m. to 2:35 p.m.

email: [hlbarton@worcesterk12.org](mailto:hlbarton@worcesterk12.org)

Worcester County Public Schools website: [www.worcesterk12.org](http://www.worcesterk12.org)

Maryland Youth Crisis Hotline Number: 1-800-422-0009



**We appreciate your support in helping our students uphold the policies and procedures that are in place to ensure an enriching educational experience while at Stephen Decatur Middle School.**