

Hillcrest Middle School Handbook
2011-2012
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Welcome to Hillcrest Middle School

Introduction

Welcome to Hillcrest Middle School. While coming back to Hillcrest for Middle School may at first seem like business as usual, 6th grade students and parents quickly discover that the Middle School experience is different and special. The objective of this handbook is to help families navigate the new environment successfully, to provide important contact information, and to encourage families to be actively involved in creating a positive Hillcrest Middle School experience.

The Hillcrest Middle School Story

In January 1950, construction began on what was known as Rockridge Highlands School. The school was originally designed to house a maximum of 210 students in grades K-3. In May 1951, the PTA voted to rename the school "Hillcrest." A 4th grade was added in the fall of 1951; 5th and 6th grades followed in 1966.

In October 1991 a devastating fire displaced 67 Hillcrest students and impacted the entire school attendance area. The district proposed closing the school and merging students to the Kaiser school site. The district was also exploring reconfiguration for the entire district. In response to these and a number of other factors, the Hillcrest School community submitted a proposal to the Oakland Unified School District to add middle school grades to its configuration. This proposal was approved in 1993.

Portable units were added to the grounds as attendance increased with the rebuilding of the neighborhood. The community mobilized to raised funds to replace the portables with a permanent building that could more adequately house the K-8 population. In 2006 construction was completed on the new building, which houses five classrooms, a library, a computer lab and a science lab.

With a K-8 configuration, Hillcrest preserves the academic culture of a small, neighborhood school through the middle grades. Students benefit by receiving a quality education with easy access to staff and a high level of parent involvement. The result is a high level of student achievement.

Academics: Teaching Staff, Course of Study, Homework & Grading

Overview

The Middle School academic and grading cycle differs from elementary school in that the Middle School is on a two semester cycle, and students receive letter grades for all courses of study. Students rotate through several classrooms throughout the day, and generally study with at least four different teachers on a given day.

Teaching Staff

Following is the Middle School teaching staff for the 2011-2012 school year.

Teacher	Class
Eileen Massey	English & History (7 th – 8 th grade)
Annelisa Hedgecock	English & History (6 th grade)
Gail Scruggs	Math (6 th – 8 th grade)
Alyson Downing	Science (6 th – 8 th grade)
Jesse Inclan	PE (6 th -8 th grade)
Marta Ilka (formerly Viteri)	Spanish (6 th – 8 th grade)
Bryan Nielsen	Information Technology (6 th – 8 th grade)
Mathilde Landberg	Art (6 th – 8 th grade)

Course of Study

English/Language Arts

All grades will use the district adopted texts, as well as supporting novels. State Standards will be followed. Multiple writing assignments will be expected throughout the year.

History

6th graders will study Ancient Civilizations, including Ancient Egypt, India, China, Greece, and Rome, using state adopted TCI – History Alive materials. Independent projects will be assigned.

7th and 8th graders will study the Middle Ages, including the Fall of the Roman Empire, The Islamic World, West African Civilizations, Asian Civilizations, Medieval Europe and the Renaissance. Several independent projects will be assigned.

Science

6th and 7th graders will study Middle School Earth Science, using the CPO district adopted Science Program, incorporating many investigations and experiments.

8th graders will study Middle School Physical Science, using the CPO district adopted Science Program, incorporating many investigations and experiments.

Math

Most 6th graders will study Math 6, using district and state standards. The text is Holt Math. There is an accelerated 6th grade group that will study Math 7, Pre-Algebra in preparation for Algebra in the 7th grade and Advanced Algebra/Geometry in the 8th grade. Students are selected for the accelerated math group by the staff, based on test scores and class performance.

Most 7th graders will study Math 7, Pre-Algebra, using district and state standards. The text is Pearson/Prentice-Hall Math. There is an accelerated 7th grade group that will study Algebra in 7th grade and Advanced Algebra/Geometry in the 8th grade. Students are selected by the staff, based on test scores and class performance.

8th graders will study Algebra, using district and state standards. The text is Holt Algebra. There is an accelerated 8th grade group that will study Geometry. Students are selected by the staff, based on test scores and class performance.

Spanish

All Middle Schoolers study Spanish with their grade level group.

Other

In addition, all students take 100 minutes per week of several different enrichment classes, including PE, Art, and Information Technology. They also have a Community Service requirement each semester.

Homework

In keeping with District Standards, students should expect to have at least 30 minutes of homework per core subject per day. This means an average of 2-3 hours per night, including reading, although homework assignments vary greatly. It can include math practice, reading, writing assignments, studying for tests, conducting research, and culminating projects. Some assignments are due the following day, and some are longer-term projects. Homework is posted daily and is accessible to students and parents on the middle school pages of the Hillcrest PTA website.

We believe reading is a lifelong habit that should be nurtured. To that end, students will be required to read one book on a different genre each month, and create a written and oral report based on their reading. Over the summer, students will be required to read two books—one title will be assigned to all students, on which they will be expected to take notes. They will also be required to read a second book of their choice, on which a written and oral report will be due on the first day of school.

Makeup: When absent from school, it is the student or family's responsibility to get the homework assignments, and turn them in on time. If a student is absent for an extended period of time, it is the student/family's responsibility to contact the teacher to arrange for appropriate academic support.

Grading

Each student receives a final grade at the end of each semester in the subject areas listed below. Students also receive progress grades two times during the semester. Grades range from A+ to F. Subjects listed together below are compiled into a single grade.

- English
- History
- Math
- Science
- Spanish (listed as “Exploratory” on Report Cards)
- PE & Art (compiled for one grade)
- IT & Community Service (compiled for one grade)

Grading Periods (or marking periods) end every 6 weeks. Report Cards are issued within two weeks following the end of a marking period. Grades reported during the first two marking periods are progress reports only. **The final grades for each semester are the average of the three marking periods in that semester, and are the only grades that appear on a students’ formal transcript.**

Last day of marking periods for 2011-2012:

- October 6th
- November 18th
- January 25th (1st Semester Grade)
- March 9th
- April 27th
- June 14th (2nd Semester Grade)

GradeBook Wizard

Students and parents are strongly encouraged to follow progress on **GradeBook Wizard**

(<https://secure.gradebookwizard.com/login.aspx>) where individual grades are posted for each assignment. Each family will be given individualized passwords to view their student's progress. It is strongly advised that both parents and students check GradeBook Wizard regularly. This will help students understand their progress and allow for timely communications with teachers about any potential academic issues. Students and parents are highly encouraged to contact teachers with questions or concerns about individual assignments or overall progress results as the semester progresses, rather than waiting until the end of a marking period after report cards have been issued. By monitoring ongoing progress, teachers, parents and students can work together to keep the students' academic experience positive and on track.

Governance & Communications

Governance

Middle School (MS) families are represented on the PTA Board by a single volunteer, the **Middle School Board Representative**, who is nominated and elected by the entire PTA body during the regular board slating process in the spring. This person also serves as 1) the primary point of communication for all MS information; and 2) a member of the **Middle School Advisory Committee**, an internal MS communication and volunteer coordination group.

The **Middle School Advisory Committee** is comprised of the Principal, MS English Language Arts Teachers and several of key Middle School parent volunteers, including (generally) the following: PTA Personnel Coordinator, Field Trip Coordinator, MS Treasurer, one Community Service Representative, Social Coordinator, Athletic Director and a Coordinator from one of the MS fundraisers. The group ensures a representative from each grade is included in the committee.

The purpose of the committee is to provide an opportunity for MS teachers, administration and MS parent leaders to communicate about the daily workings of the Middle School, discuss issues and come up with solutions when necessary. The MS Advisory Committee meets monthly (after school) and minutes and dates for meetings are posted on the MS website. Anyone is welcome to attend these meetings. Agenda items for meetings should be submitted to a committee member no less than 48 hours in advance of the meeting. Parents are encouraged to contact any member of the committee with questions or thoughts about MS activities.

Communications

The MS PTA Board Representative coordinates communication to MS families about **most non-academic topics**. If you have an item you would like distributed to MS families, please send it to the MS Board Rep who will compile and forward it in an email newsletter format. If it is an item that requires urgent communication, please indicate such in the subject line of your note and the MS Board Rep will make every effort to pass along the information as quickly as possible. Please note: only the MS Board Rep, the Principal, MS teachers, and webmaster have access to send out an email—even in the form of a reply—to the MS listserv. Please read any communications carefully and if action is required, reply to the person designated within the body of the email.

Teachers

Teachers will always be your primary contact for academic questions. Please contact them directly with any questions, issues or concerns. Their contact information can be found on the Hillcrest PTA Web Site and will also be communicated at Back to School Night.

Grades

Grades for all assignments are posted on **GradeBook Wizard**, which is accessible through the MS section of the Hillcrest website. Parents and students will both be informed of their personalized password to access student information. It is strongly advised that both parents and students check GradeBook Wizard regularly. This will help students understand their progress and allow for timely communications with teachers about any potential academic issues. Families will also receive formal grade progress reports for each marking period. There are three marking periods in each semester, so families will receive two formal progress reports prior to each of the final semester grades. But checking for feedback on individual assignments as the semester progresses allows students and parents to track status on an ongoing basis.

Other Issues or Concerns

If you have an item you would like discussed by the MS Advisory Committee, simply contact any member of the committee to include it on the agenda for the next meeting (see above for list of committee members).

Volunteers

At the end of this handbook is detailed information about every volunteer position available in the MS. The MS philosophy is that teachers, administration and parents are partners in the education of their children. This includes the need for a significant investment by parents to run fundraisers, coach teams, coordinate community service activities, and chaperone social activities and field trips. Although many key positions are filled prior to the start of school, many are not. Parents are encouraged to come to the Back to School Coffee and Back to School Night to learn more about open volunteer positions and sign up to help. For more information about the various roles and time commitments involved, refer to Section X: Volunteering."

Budgeting & Fundraising

Overview

Unlike lower grades, the 6th, 7th and 8th grades do not have individual room parents or separate class funds for items like teacher gifts, field trips, parties, etc. Rather, the MS Treasurer collects and manages funds for the entire MS. In addition, families and kids participate in fundraisers to help offset some of the costs of MS activities. **It is important to note that the PTA continues to fund the key academic support needs of the Middle School and so it is critical that MS families continue to stay engaged in all school fundraisers, not just those that offset MS-specific costs.**

The following is an outline of key expenses and the source of funds for those activities.

Expense	Funding Source
Academic Support	PTA General Fund, which comes primarily from the Hillcrest Benefit/Auction, Walkathon and beginning of the year Donation Drive
Field Trip	Individual families pay the majority of the cost of the annual field trip, however the cost is significantly offset by fundraising efforts such as Pizza Friday, Pumpkin Patch etc. Scholarships are available for the individual portion of the expense. Contact the Field Trip Coordinator or Treasurer for more information
Teacher Appreciation	Collected by MS Treasurer at the beginning of the year
Yearbook	Individual books purchased by families. MS Budget (income from fundraisers) funds yearbooks for teachers
Graduation	Small expense for ceremony and activities funded through MS budget (income from fundraisers)
Dances	Small expense funded through MS budget (income from fundraisers, including nominal "entrance" fee to dances)
Athletics	Individuals pay directly to cover costs of sports participation. All students will be allowed to play regardless of ability to pay. Scholarships are available. Contact Athletic Director for more information.
MS Families Benefit Contribution – Instant Wine Cellar & Basket	The MS Benefit Coordinator will ask MS families to contribute to the Instant Wine Cellar. This is the MS "class contribution" to the Benefit (similar to the class art projects in younger grades). In addition, the MS Treasurer will ask for a small contribution for the class wine themed basket at the beginning of the year as well.
MS Families Walkathon	MS students are asked to bake cakes and volunteer their time for

Contribution	the Cake Walk at the Walkathon in the spring. Parents are also asked to volunteer their time at the Walkathon as well
Team Building	Each year teachers, administration and parents work together to find opportunities to maintain and improve the MS climate. Over the years, this has included: an overnight trip on the Balclutha, as well as team-building days at the school. The PTA has contributed significantly to these expenses (through Programming and Personnel budgets), but income raised from MS fundraisers occasionally contributes to cover these costs as well

Middle School Fundraisers

Middle School fundraisers are conducted throughout the year primarily to offset the cost of the MS field trip, as well as to provide small contributions toward social activities, team building activities, scholarships, and other needs as outlined above. The MS conducts two types of fundraisers: ongoing and periodic. The success of the fundraisers largely impacts the amount each family pays to cover the costs of the annual field trip.

Ongoing Fundraisers

A variety of fundraisers are conducted throughout the entire school year. These include:

Pizza Friday – pizza is served to participating students aged 4th – 8th grade each Friday. Requires an overall coordinator and weekly volunteers.

Asian Tuesday – inspired by the success of Pizza Friday, Asian food is offered to participating students aged 4th -8th grade each Tuesday. Requires an overall coordinator and weekly volunteers.

Snack Bar – every Tuesday and Thursday, a small “snack bar” is available to MS students and teachers. The Snack Bar includes non-perishable items, such as vitamin water, Cup of Noodles, chips, fruit snacks, bags of cookies, and other snacks. Requires an overall coordinator and weekly volunteers.

Periodic Fundraisers

In addition to ongoing fundraisers, periodic activities are also conducted to offset costs. These include:

Pumpkin Patch – During the month of October, the MS coordinates a pumpkin patch, costume swap and bake sale. Requires an overall coordinator, committee to assist, and volunteers to oversee pumpkin patch shifts.

See’s Candy – The See’s Candy fundraiser generally takes place once per year (either before Winter Break or before Valentine’s Day) and involves the MS students selling boxes of

chocolates and other candy. Requires an overall coordinator, committee to assist, and volunteers to oversee See's candy after-school shifts.

Please see job descriptions in the Volunteering Section for more information on how to help.

Field Trip

Annually, all Hillcrest Middle School students participate in an outdoor education excursion to one of three destinations (in rotation throughout their three years in middle school): Yosemite National Park, El Capitan State beach (on the Santa Barbara coast) and Pinnacles National Monument. This multi-night (generally 4-day/3-night) trip is organized in partnership with Naturalists At Large, an outdoor education organization. NAL naturalists facilitate the student experience through daily activities (some, depending upon location) such as hiking, team-building exercises, hands-on science, kayaking, climbing, etc. Hillcrest parents and teachers serve as chaperones. In addition to delivering the multi-day curriculum, NAL provides sleeping tents plus all food, including prep and cooking. Students are actively involved in camp life – from setting up tents to daily assistance with after meal clean up. For each trip, students are split into small multi-grade groups. Each group is assigned a Naturalist as well as a parent chaperone. Teachers rotate between groups. Fees for the trip are offset by various MS fundraising efforts (see details above); families pay the balance. Transport to and from each destination is by hired coach. One chaperone car will also follow buses in case a need arises during the field trip requiring a vehicle. Scholarships are available.

The trip is taken in the spring season (May) to take advantage of best weather options coupled with easing of academic demands (post STAR testing).

Coordination of all pre- trip planning is handled by the parent Field Trip Coordinator. Responsibilities for this role center around communication with parents, teachers, administration and NAL. The parent Field Trip Coordinator is also the lead chaperone for the trip.

Parents will receive more information about the field trip at Back to School Night and in specially scheduled meetings and communications throughout the year. Parents will have an opportunity to submit their name to be chaperones at a meeting in the fall. Most years there are more names submitted than slots available and not all people volunteering to chaperone will be able to attend. Each selected chaperone goes through a rigorous and lengthy approval process, including fingerprinting that is run through FBI screening, and testing for TB and other contagious diseases. People selected to chaperone must be willing to go through the screening process before the end of the fall in order to ensure that the results are returned before the spring field trip. In the event that test results are not returned in time and/or come back with a result providing a reason that someone should not chaperone, an alternate who has previously passed the screening process will be selected. Your flexibility with this process is appreciated.

During the year the Field Trip Coordinator will make multiple requests for paperwork and other information from your family. Please be responsive - this is a challenging outing to organize and your prompt responses are very helpful!

For more information about NAL go to: <http://www.naturalistsatlarge.com/> . Comprehensive trip information is also available on the Hillcrest website: <http://www.hillcrestpta.org/classroom/midschool/fieldtrip/>

Community Service

Overview

The Middle School Community Service program is a continuation and extension of the activities in which they have participated since Kindergarten. The table below provides an overview of the current All School Community Service program, followed by the specific MS program goals, expectations and activities.

Hillcrest Community Service Guiding Principles:

- Connect with our school community.
- Connect with our greater Oakland schools community.
- Connect with our greater Oakland community.
- Honor community service work done by students with their families and community groups.

Philosophy: You don't have to be powerful to make a huge impact on your community. Community Service TEACHES and MODELS for our children what it means to be part of a community. Our community is Oakland.

Expectation: All Hillcrest students – from kindergarten through 8th grade – can contribute their time and effort to better their community.

Paradigm Shift: In the past, children collected money or things to contribute to organizations to which they had little connection or follow-up. The child's focus was on competing to see who could collect the most. We believe there is more power in DOING. When we give more of ourselves in the form of time, effort and talent, we create an opportunity to connect and interact with those we are helping. Ongoing projects have been established at each grade level as defined below. Other projects are funded with volunteer time and effort as they arise.

Grade Level	Project	Curriculum
Kindergarten	Piedmont Gardens Senior Center	Students learn songs to sing to residents of a local senior center. The lessons incorporate creating and sending student art, letters and other written materials to senior center residents. Through this project, students build empathy and awareness of different generations and enforce the life skills of caring and giving to others. The curriculum also includes art and writing for a purpose.

Grade Level	Project	Curriculum
First	Book Drive – for libraries and schools with few books	Students build an understanding that many children are less fortunate than them and that they can help them by donating something that they take for granted—books. The lessons will reinforce an ongoing curriculum focus on the importance of learning to read and reading often. Students make posters that encourage book donation. Students count and sort books according to genre.
Second	Food Drive for Alameda Food Bank	A representative from the Alameda Food Bank gives lessons on why we need to collect food for people in our community, as well as health lessons on the different types of food the body needs. Students make posters to encourage families to donate non-perishable food. Students count and record the amount of food donated and separate donations by food group.
Third	Henry J. Robinson Multi-Service Center	Students make lunches for families living in shelters. This project allows them to develop empathy and awareness of families in crisis in Oakland and better understand how they can make a difference. Lessons incorporate art (decorating bags), letter writing, hygiene (washing hands), healthy food, and nutrition.
Fourth		TBD
Fifth	Temescal Invasive Plant Removal/ Davis St. Recycling Ctr	Fifth grade students incorporate science (Living Systems, FOSS) into their community service project. Their lessons enable them to learn about native vs. non-native plants and the effects of non-native plants in the ecosystem. This includes helping restore a local park to its native state. Students participate in Hillcrest Green Team activities, including the opportunity to learn about food waste and recyclables, and where trash goes when we throw things away.

Grade Level	Project	Curriculum
Middle School	School Service and Individual Community Service Projects	Continuing the learning begun in the lower grades— developing empathy for others and caring for the environment— the middle school service program focuses on our unique opportunity as a K-8 school to give back to our community thru school service. Middle school students can make an impact on their school through their role-modeling and leadership of the younger students, fundraising efforts, and caring for the school site. Students who already participate in service programs with their family, or other charitable organizations, may get credit for these hours as an alternative.
Hillcrest Community at Large	Hillcrest Helps Out: Families Reaching Out to Other Oakland Schools	<p>Our school community service coordinator looks for opportunities several times per year, for Hillcrest parents and students to work together to make a difference at other Oakland Schools. We try to select projects that encourage parents and children from the school we are helping to join us in making a difference.</p> <p>We are currently “Sister Schools” with Lockwood, Santa Fe, Sankofa, and Piedmont Avenue. Over the years, we have also provided support to Allendale, Think College Now, Lincoln, Reach Academy, Lakeview, Madison Middle, Lazear, Maxwell Park, Place at Prescott, Hoover, West Oakland Middle School and Emerson.</p>

Middle School Community Service Program

Goals & Expectations

Every Middle School student will have the opportunity to connect and feel ownership of their school through their service to the younger students, and the Hillcrest community as a whole, by completing a minimum of 4 hours of service per marking period, or 12 hours per semester.

Responsibility

Each student is responsible for maintaining a log of their activities with adult signatures verifying the hours of service. Students must present a signed log at the end of each marking period, which will be incorporated into progress reports and semester grades.

Parent Support

As detailed in Volunteer section of this handbook, Community Service grade level coordinators help students find interesting and fulfilling service activities, as well as keep a record of class service hours. Parent coordinators communicate expectations to students and parents throughout the year.

6th Grade: **OPEN** 7th Grade: Donna Somerville 8th Grade: Monica Marcone

School Service Activities

Listed below are a few examples of possible service activities at Hillcrest. Activities are focused in three areas:

- Helping Younger Students (e.g. tutors/reading buddies, lunch aides, PTA babysitters),
- Making the School a Better Place For All (e.g. safety patrol, green team, recycling mentors, conflict managers), and
- Raising Money for the Middle School (e.g. Pizza Friday, Pumpkin Patch, See's Candy and other fundraisers).

Additional activities are posted on the Community Service bulletin board in the main hallway and communicated by the grade level coordinators. Students with additional ideas for service activities should make a proposal to their grade level coordinator.

Activity	Comments
First Grade Reading Buddies	Read with a 1 st grade student for 30 minutes a day on Tuesdays, Thursdays and/or Fridays after school under the supervision of Ms. Inclan and Mr. Shogren.
Tutors	Tutor a 2 nd – 4 th grade student after school for 30 - 60 minutes on topics assigned by the student's teacher, in that teacher's classroom.
Teacher's Assistants	Assist teachers with projects, usually before or after school. Opportunities are listed on the MS Community Service Bulletin Board.
Fundraising Volunteers	Assist with middle school fundraisers (Pizza Friday, Asian Tuesday, See's Candy, Pumpkin Patch, etc.) to raise money that defrays the cost of the annual middle school overnight trip. Volunteer shifts are listed on the MS Community Bulletin Board.
Green Ambassadors	Help younger students organize lunch waste into food waste, recycling, and trash so that they will deposit waste into appropriate bins. Opportunities exist from 12:10 – 12:30 pm every day at lunch.

Office Assistants	Answer phones, take messages and log student absences in the school front office from 8:00 – 8:30 am every day.
Library Assistants	Help monitor the library, check out books, and shelve books before school, after school and/or during lunch recess.
PTA Babysitters	Babysit for PTA Board Members/PTA Meetings once a month from 6:00 – 7:00 pm. Volunteer shifts are listed on MS Community Service Bulletin Board.
Safety Patrol	Assist 4 th & 5 th grade safety patrol members with car door opening before school. Safety Patrol training class required.
School Garden Projects	Assist with the school gardening projects to beautify our school grounds, as directed by Hillcrest Gardening Committee.
Activities Outside of Hillcrest	We highly encourage volunteering with activities outside Hillcrest! Students should talk to their grade level coordinator about any outside volunteer activities, and take their Community Service card to the supervisor of those activities for verification of time served.

Community Service Grading Process

As explained in the Grading section, students will be graded on two Exploratory Wheels for all enrichment programs. Wheel 1 will include PE and Art. Wheel 2 will include IT and Community Service.

The grading system for community service is simple: 4 hours = A (4 points), 3 hours = B (3 points), 2 hours = C (2 points), 1 hours = D (1 point), 0 hours = F (0 points). Students with over 12 hours of community service per semester will be recognized in the Yellow Pages and at Opening Circle.

Athletics

Overview

All Hillcrest MS students are invited to participate in the athletics program. Currently we field the teams listed in the table below. All MS sports except cross-country are run through the Middle School Sports League, a small school league in the area, which includes Redwood Day, St. Paul's, Tehiyah Day School, Bentley, Prospect Sierra, Athenian, Park Day, Windrush, Raskob and Archway.

Sport	Season
Co-ed Football	Fall (Sept through Mid-Nov); for 2011 practices will be on Mondays and Wednesdays beginning 8/31
Co-ed Cross Country Running	Fall (Sept through Mid-Nov); meets are typically on Mondays and Thursdays
Boys' Basketball	Winter (Dec through Mid-March); practice days TBD
Girls' Basketball	Winter (Dec through Mid-March); practice days TBD
Co-ed Volleyball	Spring (Mid-March through May); practice days TBD

Philosophy

The athletic program at Hillcrest is intended to be fun, educational, team-spirited and inclusive. We are a small school, and thus, it is expected that participants will have a wide variety of experience and skill levels. The following outlines some basic tenets on which the program is run.

- Every MS student is invited to play, regardless of experience
- The number of teams fielded for a given sport is dependent on student interest, experience level of the collective group and number of coaches available to assist
- If there is more than one team:
 - 6th graders should generally expect to play on the JV team
 - Most 8th graders, particularly if they have participated in a sport for the prior two years, can expect to play on the Varsity Team. However, 8th graders are not guaranteed to play Varsity. Coaches will consider prior commitment and experience of individual players, and also the experience level of all players when forming teams

- Coaches are instructed to create game line-up's with approximately equal play time regardless of player experience

Costs

The MS athletics program must be financially self-sufficient. Fees requested are voluntary and scholarships are available such that every interested student should be able to play. Contact the MS Athletic Director for more information on scholarships. By it's charter, the PTA is not allowed to support MS athletics financially. Volunteer coaches help keep the cost of participation down. If you are a parent with a skill set that would help, please let us know. Parent volunteers (and all coaches) are asked to go through the OUSD security clearance process.

Costs for the program include: field/court rentals, league referee fees, coaching costs, and equipment maintenance costs. The Athletic Director collects and distributes all funds. This is not a fundraiser—the fees collected for MS sports are expected to directly offset the costs.

Social Activities

Dances

Several times a year the MS Social Committee helps organize a MS dance in the multi-purpose room. Dances are in the evening for approximately two hours. Parents act as organizers, DJs, and chaperones. Often, other schools are formally asked to join us (for example St. Theresa's or St. Paul's).

A permission slip is required to attend the dance. Guests are permitted, but must also have a permission slip. Parent pick up is required and parent drivers must be seen by a chaperone before students are released (students will not be released to leave on their own). Strict standards for respectful behavior are maintained by students and guests, and implemented at the discretion of the chaperones on the evening of the event. Parents will be called and asked to pick up any student or guest who does not behave in a respectful manner.

Songs are pre-screened by an adult volunteer, and every effort is made to choose music that reflects the taste of the students while exercising reasonable parental oversight with respect to content.

Other Social Activities

Opportunities for the group to gather in a safe, fun and positive way (for example, bowling night) are encouraged. Parent volunteers are needed to organize, drive to, and supervise such activities. If you have suggestions for a social event, please contact the MS Social Committee.

School Climate/Team Building

Teachers, administration and parents are always looking for ways to facilitate and encourage a positive school climate. In 2011-2012 the PTA has budgeted for team building consultant Dave Nettell to return and work with all MS students in grade specific groupings over multiple sessions throughout the year. Dave Nettell worked with the students in 2010-2011 and received overwhelming positive feedback from the students, parents, and administration.

Policies

Discipline

We strongly believe that learning must take place within a safe and positive environment. Thus, our discipline policy is intended to be progressive, balanced, and applied in a fair and consistent manner. It is however only a guideline. Instances may arise that are not specified in the policy. We will address those issues in a manner consistent with the intent of our policy. Detailed descriptions of offenses and consequences are delineated in the Parent Guide to Oakland Public Schools. See the [School Handbook page](#) and the [Schoolwide Expected Behaviors page](#) of the Hillcrest PTA web site for complete text.

Cell Phones

Students are permitted to bring cell phones to school; however, they are to be turned off (not on silent or vibration mode) during the hours of instruction and must be placed in the student's backpack. Please note that the use of phones for texting, gaming, Internet use and listening to music will not be allowed. If a student's cell phone rings during the hours of instruction or is seen in plain sight, the phone will be confiscated and a parent will be required to retrieve the phone from the school principal. The student will also receive a consequence per our progressive discipline plan. For example, repetition of this offense may require the student to check his/her cellular phone in and out of the office daily, and could possibly lead to leaving the phone at home for the remainder of the school year if infractions continue. Please keep in mind that Hillcrest School is not responsible for lost or stolen phones and that an office phone is always available for student use.

Personal Appearance

Although Hillcrest does not require students to dress in uniform, we do expect students to come to school dressed in a manner that is conducive to work and learning.. Pants, shorts and skirts must be worn on the waist and have a waistline no larger than two inches larger than the student's waist. Tops must cover the upper half of the body to the hip, leaving no gap through which the body/skin beneath is visible. Shorts and skirts must be of reasonable length, and not be distracting to classmates or teachers. Shoes must be secured firmly to the feet, provide safe support to the feet and have a heel that allows for safe daily activity – including running or other rigorous physical activity. Flip-flop style sandals or shoes are not considered safe.

Sleeveless and tank tops are acceptable, but spaghetti strap tops are only acceptable when paired with a sleeved top. Hats and caps, other than religious headgear, and dark glasses are for outdoor use only.

Students, who wear clothing that is determined as inappropriate, distracting to the educational process, and/or dangerous to health and safety, will be sent home.

Medication

Students who take medication during the school day on a limited and/or regular schedule, must have a written prescription/authorization from their doctor on file with the school. Appropriate forms are available in the office. All medication must be kept in the office.

Volunteering

Following is a list of the key MS volunteer positions. Although most of the key positions are filled prior to the start of school, many are not. Parents are encouraged to come to the Back to School Coffee and Back to School Night to learn more about open volunteer positions, and to sign up to help.

MS PTA Board Representative

The Middle School PTA Board Representative functions largely as the “room parent” for the Middle School. This person is generally the only parent who has access rights to the entire MS parent email list. As such, all communications to parents for fundraising efforts, social events, athletic activities, field trip needs, etc., are funneled through him/her. As with other room parent duties, the MS PTA Board Representative ensures that all volunteer positions have been filled, and occasionally checks in with each main area coordinator to make sure any efforts (specifically related to fundraising) are on track. In addition, the MS PTA Board Representative attends PTA Board meetings and actively participates on the MS Advisory Committee. On “Back to School” night for the MS, this person also coordinates the MS parent volunteer communications part of the evening.

2011-2012 Volunteer: Rebecca Johnson

Field Trip Coordinator

Each year, the Middle School goes on a four-day, three-night field trip, usually in the spring. The location rotates each year, but traditionally over the course of their time in MS, each student will go to El Capitan (Santa Barbara), Pinnacles National Monument, and Yosemite; all trips that are organized through a well-run group called Naturalists at Large (NAL). The MS Field Trip Coordinator is responsible for the overall organization of this annual event, and also serves on the MS Advisory Committee.

A major duty for the FT Coordinator includes communicating with families, NAL and school administration throughout the entire year. The FT Coordinator organizes, distributes and collects all required documentation. This includes: getting contracts, invoices and payment schedule from NAL; forwarding them to the Hillcrest Principal for review and approval; and getting documents signed/submitted by families (ensuring 100% completion of each student’s packet of permission forms and waivers before departure). He/she oversees all bus transportation details, develops a trip budget with MS Treasurer, collects trip fees from families and oversees scholarships, if requested. The FT Coordinator works with an NAL spokesperson to organize an informational assembly for parents at the school. He/she also coordinates all parent chaperone requirements, including communication to them, finding backups, hosting an orientation meeting before the trip, and making sure each chaperone has all OUSD required clearance documents on file before departure.

Throughout the year, the FT Coordinator works with the MS Communications Coordinator to share any pertinent trip details with parents, including emergency contact procedures, form submission dates, departure/arrival information, etc. Finally, the FT Coordinator attends the trip as head chaperone and has a blast!

2011-2012 Volunteer: Diana Biondo

Athletic Director

The Middle School Athletic Director oversees all activities pertaining to all Middle School sports teams, which have traditionally included: Co-ed Cross Country, Co-ed Football, Boys and Girls Basketball, and Co-ed Volleyball. All sports teams except Cross Country are organized through the Middle School Sports League.

Duties related to organizing the sports teams include the following for each sport: league interaction and coordination; financial management; facilities and equipment coordination; hiring and management of coaches; scheduling games and referees; and coordination of communication between all parties. This person also serves on the MS Advisory Committee.

2011-2012 Volunteer: Monica Marcone

Middle School Treasurer

The MS Treasurer prepares and tracks the annual MS budget (working closely with the PTA Treasurer and Deposit Manager). The MS Treasurer keeps records of all MS financial transactions, monitors all MS expenses, and keeps track of requests for reimbursement, etc. This includes deposits and expenses for MS fundraising efforts, social events, and the overnight field trip. The MS Treasurer also handles funds for MS holiday and year-end gifts and serves on the MS Advisory Committee. In addition, he/she prepares a monthly budget report for the MS Advisory Committee and presents a bi-annual MS Budget report to the PTA.

2011-2012 Volunteer: Sandy Fox

8th Grade Night of Benefit Supervisor

Traditionally, the 8th grade students are invited to help on the night of the Benefit. One or two parents are required to coordinate this effort. This involves: working with the Benefit Committee to understand roles and responsibilities needed; coordinating with teachers to solicit student volunteers; communicating volunteer roles and expectations with 8th grade students and their parents in advance of the Benefit; collecting parent permission slips; selecting certain students to help with different Benefit needs; arriving early the night of the Benefit to provide final instruction to student volunteers; and supervising students to ensure appropriate behavior

throughout the evening. This is a great role for someone who would like to participate in the Benefit, but who doesn't anticipate being an active bidder in the Live or Silent Auctions.

2011-2012 Volunteer: **OPEN**

Instant Wine Cellar Captain & Benefit Wine Basket Coordinator (Two Positions)

The MS class contribution to the Benefit is to coordinate the Instant Wine Cellar and an accompanying "class basket" with a wine theme. Activities related to this position include identifying a lead donor for the wine cellar (for example, a local wine shop); finding creative ways to solicit wine donations from all Hillcrest families, but in particular, from MS families (which includes communications in the Yellow Pages and Benefit newsletter); collecting wine at the school in the weeks prior to the Benefit; compiling information on wines collected; helping write up the catalog description of the offering; and creating a compelling display the night of the event.

Except for soliciting a lead donor, similar activities are needed to put together a wine basket. The Instant Wine Cellar often has contributions from the entire school population; however the Wine Basket contributions come from the MS families alone.

2011-2012 Volunteers: **OPEN**

Walkathon Coordinator

The MS Walkathon Coordinator oversees all aspects of the Middle School contribution to the Walkathon and acts as the primary contact for the Walkathon committee. While Middle School kids are encouraged to walk and raise funds for the school, many would rather contribute by volunteering the day of the event with carnival games, booths, activities, etc., or by organizing and running the Cake Walk. Responsibilities include coordination with the Walkathon Committee to understand logistics and volunteer needs; communicating volunteer needs to students and families; scheduling MS volunteers the day of the Walkathon; securing a parent volunteer to execute and run the Cake Walk; and supervising MS student volunteers the day of the carnival.

2011-2012 Volunteer: **OPEN**

Social Activities Coordinator

The Social Activities Coordinator organizes and executes all MS social events, such as dances, bowling nights, etc. He/she works closely with MS teachers, principal and custodial staff to schedule and communicate dates. For dances, this also requires coordination with parent(s)

designated to provide sound/music. The Social Activities Coordinator prepares permissions slips for students and collects any funds that might be associated with the event. This position is sometimes shared, and the parent(s) coordinating these activities often enlist the help of their middle school student and other student representatives in planning events, as well as creating and distributing flyers. The Social Activities Coordinator recruits parental volunteers to help monitor and supervise events. He/she also sits on the MS Advisory Committee.

2011-2012 Volunteer: **OPEN**

Community Service Representative (One Volunteer Per Grade)

Each Community Service (CS) Representative is responsible for coordinating community service efforts for their grade. Students are required to fulfill 4 hours of CS each marking period and their efforts are included in their grades. The CS reps work together to: reach out to the Hillcrest community and outside community to provide CS opportunities for the students; inspire students to come up with their own ideas for service; communicate with teachers and others who organize service opportunities; make sure students are informed about opportunities and deadlines for hours; and collect and submit hours for each student at the end of the marking period for inclusion in grades. Meetings with other CS Grade Reps are scheduled as needed. One CS Rep is also designated to participate in the MS Advisory Committee.

2011-2012 Volunteers:

6th – **OPEN**; 7th – Donna Somerville; 8th – Monica Marcone

Graduation Committee Coordinator

The Graduation Committee Coordinator works with the Principal, MS teachers, student representatives and a committee of 8th grade parents to organize graduation-related activities. This includes: creating a graduation invitation, designing, printing and distributing a program; finding a location for an 8th grade graduation party (typically at an 8th graders home); and communicating graduation activities to parents and students. This may also include collecting funds and coordinating with an outside location if the graduation party is not at someone's home.

2011-2012 Volunteer: **OPEN**

Pumpkin Patch Fundraiser Coordinator

The Pumpkin Patch Coordinator is responsible for all aspects of the annual Hillcrest Pumpkin Patch/Bake Sale, conducted each October. The Pumpkin Patch Coordinator typically organizes a committee of MS parents to help: order the Pumpkins and other supplies; publicize the event

to the school and neighborhood; coordinate a MS student competition for individual pumpkin sales, (including communicating it to students, creating a collection sheet, tracking results and securing a prize for the winner); work with the Middle School teachers to arrange for student Pumpkin Patch volunteers; communicate needs to students and parents for bringing in baked goods, volunteering for Pumpkin Patch shifts and handling the money raised.

2011-2012 Volunteer: **OPEN**

See's Candy Coordinator

The See's Candy fundraiser takes place once per year, either before the Winter Break or before Valentines' Day. Similar to the Pumpkin Patch Coordinator, the See's Candy Coordinator oversees a committee of MS parents to: communicate with See's Candy; gather supplies required to sell candy; publicize the event to the school and neighborhood; coordinate a MS student competition for individual See's Candy sales, (including communicating the competition to students, collecting and tracking results and securing a prize for the winner); work with the Middle School teachers to arrange for students to man an after-school See's candy table; communicate with parents; order and pick-up candy from See's Candy store; oversee distribution of candy; and collect and track money raised.

2011-2012 Volunteer: **OPEN**

Snack Bar Coordinator

The Snack Bar is a year-round fundraiser. The Snack Bar Coordinator purchases and delivers bulk items (such as vitamin water, Cup of Noodles/spoons, chips, fruit snacks, bags of cookies, etc.) to be sold as snacks and oversees a committee of parent volunteers to staff the Snack Bar. Typically the Snack Bar Coordinator stocks the Snack Bar once or twice per semester, or as needed when supplies run low. The Snack Bar is open only to MS students and teachers every Tuesday and Thursday from 12:20 pm – 12:40 pm. In addition, the Snack Bar Coordinator: communicates Snack Bar shifts to parent volunteers; collects money raised; creates deposits; and reports deposits to MS Treasurer.

2011-2012 Volunteer: **OPEN**

Pizza Friday/Asian Tuesday Coordinator

Pizza Friday, which runs year round and is available to students in grades 4-8, is the largest MS fundraiser. The Coordinator for Pizza Friday/Asian Tuesday: creates a flyer for inclusion in Yellow Pages at the beginning of each semester; collects payments (which are required before the semester begins, in advance of sales); places orders; and arranges to have Asian food and drinks delivered and available every Tuesday and pizza and drinks delivered and available each Friday for participating students. This person also: oversees a committee of parent and student volunteers to distribute food on Tuesdays and Fridays; creates deposits; and reports deposits to MS Treasurer at the beginning and end of each semester. No money is handled on Asian Tuesdays or Pizza Fridays.

2011-2012 Volunteers:

Pizza Friday - Linda Sawyer (**NEED 1 MORE**);

Asian Tuesday - **OPEN**

