

South Orange Middle School



STUDENT HANDBOOK

2022-2023

VISITORS

All visitors must enter through the front entrance of SOMS on North Ridgewood Road. Upon being buzzed in, visitors are to stop and sign in with the security guard to receive a pass. Student visitors are not permitted as a matter of safety and that they typically detract from the educational process.

SOMS VISION and MISSION STATEMENTS

VISION:

The stakeholders at South Orange Middle School will work to collectively ensure that we are the top-performing middle school in the nation by focusing on: Academic Excellence, Cultural Competency and Social Equity. We will accomplish this goal by supporting our students' academic and personal pursuits, and by inspiring our scholars to become model citizens.

MISSION:

The mission of the South Orange Maplewood School District is to empower and inspire each student to explore and imagine, to pursue personal passions, and to collectively create a better future by creating a learner-centered environment through multiple pathways; reimagined structures, systems and supports; innovative teaching; partnering with families; and maximizing community expertise and resources.

Lynn A. Irby, Principal
James Jennings, Assistant Principal
James Waldron, Assistant Principal

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS AT SOMS

To succeed in middle school, you need to bring a positive attitude and tireless effort. In addition, commit yourself to meeting the following five expectations we have for all students.

1. **Be on time for school.**
2. **Be on time for class.**
3. **Be prepared.** Every day, come prepared with the tools for success. These include:
 - a. A Positive attitude.
 - b. Your best effort.
 - c. Your materials (notebooks, pens, homework, etc).
 - d. Submit missed work and assignments in a timely manner

4. **Be respectful.** Be kind, compassionate, and respectful to every member of our community, to yourself, and to our building.
5. **Follow** the appropriate directives and requests of administrators, teachers, and staff.

SCHOOL HOURS

8:15 a.m.	Doors open
8:20 a.m.	Students must be seated in their first period class for attendance <i>at this time.</i>
2:45 pm.	Final bell for scheduled classes
3:14 p.m.	End of conference period and/or teacher detentions

12:30 PM DISMISSAL DAYS

A few days shown on the calendar are 12:30 p.m. dismissal days. These are regular attendance days, except that lunch is not served. Class periods are slightly shorter, but all classes meet unless a special schedule is announced. You will report to school at the regular time.

GOING TO AND FROM SCHOOL

EARLY ARRIVAL

We ask that students do not arrive at the school prior to 8:10. Students who do arrive before 8:15 a.m. will have to wait outside the building because **staff supervision does not begin until 8:15 a.m.** Students may not wait inside the building except in the case of extreme weather. Students who are purchasing and eating breakfast should report to the cafeteria. Only students eating breakfast are allowed in the cafeteria.

ENTRANCES and EXITS

Sixth graders enter the building through the REAR doors (rear parking lot entrance) and seventh and eighth graders enter through the FRONT of the building (North Ridgewood Road). Seventh graders enter the door closest to the driveway entering the parking lot. Eighth graders enter the main door.

DISMISSAL

Students must leave school grounds promptly after dismissal unless requested to stay during the conference period by a teacher or participating in an after school activity. This includes detention, extra help, club or school activity, etc.

Parents who need supervision for their children beyond 3:15 PM, should contact the **SOMS YOUTHNET PLUS at (973) 763-6371**. (Unsupervised children are not permitted in the building beyond dismissal.)

BICYCLES

The Board will permit the use of bicycles by pupils in grades six through twelve in accordance with district rules. If you ride your bike to school, you must wear your helmet, as required by law! If you do ride your bike, there is a bike rack on the side of the building. This is the **ONLY** place you may leave your bike during the day. Be sure to lock and chain it to the bike rack. The school is **NOT** responsible for damage or theft of parts of bicycles that are parked at schools. **Students are not to ride their bikes on school property.**

BUS

The transportation department notifies and sends information to students eligible for bus services prior to the beginning of the school year. Bus conduct rules follow the same school behavior policies. Repeated misconduct may result in temporary or permanent removal from the bus.

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is an essential part of academic success. Students are required by district policy and state law to attend school on a daily basis. In instances when students begin to demonstrate a pattern of absences, the school will begin progressive interventions to try to establish more consistent attendance. These interventions include:

- Letter to Parents/Meeting between Counselor and Student
- Letter to Parents/Meeting between Counselor and Parents – Development of Attendance Action Plan
- Meeting between Parents and Administration

ABSENCES

Chronic absenteeism can have a negative impact on a child's education. We encourage your child to attend school regularly, to afford every opportunity to succeed.

Parents are to call (973) 378-2772 ext 2003 between 8:00 and 8:30 a.m. to report if their child is absent. An automated call will be made by the school to the home whenever a child is absent.

When students return to school after a 5 day absence, they must bring a note signed by their parents stating the specific reason for their absence.

Absences and tardiness are only excused for religious or legal reasons, medical appointments, or a death in the family.

TARDIES

You will be considered late if you are not seated in your PERIOD 1 class by 8:20 a.m. If you arrive after 8:20 you **MUST** report to the main office for a pass **BEFORE** going to class to avoid being marked "Absent" from school.

After initial warning, if a student continues to be tardy (excused or unexcused), the teacher may do one or more of the following:

- 4 tardies = teacher detention; parent contact
- 8 tardies = administrative/lunch detention; parent contact
- 12 tardies = parent conference with administrator & counselor

Students who accumulate multiple unexcused tardies in each marking period are subject to disciplinary action.

EARLY DISMISSAL

Dismissal before the end of the school day disrupts learning for many students. We take learning seriously and ask that after school appointments be scheduled with our dismissal times in mind. Please understand that our office staff is very busy preparing for dismissal each afternoon and kindly request that parents/caregivers refrain from picking up their children before dismissal time unless there is an emergency.

If you must leave school early, you do not need to call in advance, a parent/caregiver must report to the security desk and sign their student out of school before leaving the building.

Any person picking up a SOMS student must be on the list provided by the parent or guardian that is listed in PowerSchool. They must be at least 18 years old. No student will be allowed to walk home before the end of the school day.

HALLWAYS

Period Change:

Students are expected to observe the following rules during change of periods:

- a) Walk to the right in halls and on stairwells
- b) Pass to the next class within 3 minutes. Go directly to your classroom. Visiting other teachers, students, bathrooms, or counselors is not permitted without a pass
- c) Use a quiet voice and appropriate language at all times.
- d) **Cell phone use is not permitted in the hallways.**

GENERAL RULES

In order for students to receive the best possible education and create a safe, secure atmosphere in which to learn, the following rules and prohibitions must be followed. Failure to do so may result in consequences.

- a) Appropriate language is required within our school or school vicinity and on all school sponsored trips.
- b) We have a zero tolerance policy for violence, which includes horseplay. (There is no such thing as play fighting!)
- c) Any student involved in cheating or plagiarizing, including signing someone

else's name, may face academic consequences such as loss of credit or lowering of a grade.

- d) No student will be allowed to eat or drink any food in the building during school hours except in the cafeteria during breakfast, and lunch periods, unless a staff member has granted the student permission to do so. Students found eating or drinking may have the items taken from them.
- e) Bystanders who instigate, video record and/or post incidents to social media are subject to disciplinary action.

DRESS CODE

At all of our District Schools, we expect all students and staff to dress appropriately for the educational and the professional community we are.

- Students are not permitted to wear clothing with offensive messages that reference sex, violence, weapons, drugs, alcohol, gang affiliations, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, gender, etc., and that has the effect of substantially and materially interfering with the school program purposes or medical reasons.
- Underwear must not be visible.
- Clothing and undergarments should cover skin as appropriate for a school and professional setting. All tops should have straps.
- See-through clothing is prohibited.
- Shoes that increase the likelihood of accidents and injury should not be worn, this includes slides or flip flops.
- Sunshades or any dark glasses should not be worn unless they are prescribed for medical reasons and a doctor's note is on file in the medical office.
- Chains or jewelry with sharp projections should not be worn.
- Headgear, which hinders or limits the visibility of the face including hats, hoods, etc are not permitted to be worn except for religious or medical reasons.

In all instances the building administration shall

make the final determination on the appropriateness of dress and grooming during school hours and/or school functions.

CONSEQUENCES

Students who violate this dress code will be asked to change their clothing as needed with parental or school assistance and with every effort to minimize loss of instructional time and any embarrassment to students. In the event of repeated violations, students, parents/guardians and school administration will meet to remedy the situation.

PROGRAM OF STUDY

ACADEMIC TEAMS

Every student is part of an academic team. Teams consist of a Language Arts, Math, SS, Science, and Special Education teacher. Each of the teachers on a team share the same students and common time to plan their lessons and have parent meetings. Essentially, academic teams are small learning communities or schools within the school. Team activities are planned throughout the year for sharing the learning and the fun of middle school. Each team has a teacher/leader that coordinates the work of the team. The team leaders are as follows:

Team 6A: Ms. Abella labella@somssd.k12.nj.us
Team 6B: Ms. McClure jmcclure@somssd.k12.nj.us
Team 6C: Ms. Keegan lkeegan@somssd.k12.nj.us

Team 7A: Ms. Spagnuolo mspagnuolo@somssd.k12.nj.us
Team 7B: Ms. Chirlo nchirlo@somssd.k12.nj.us
Team 7C: Mr. A. Cicenía acicenia@somssd.k12.nj.us

Team 8A: Ms. McGlotten lmcglott@somssd.k12.nj.us
Team 8B: Ms. Crane acrane@somssd.k12.nj.us
Team 8C: Ms. Rosen hrosen@somssd.k12.nj.us

CORE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

In each grade, all students take the 4 core subjects: language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. Spanish and Mandarin are our World Language options. Subjects included in the related arts program are: 2D and 3D Art, Health and Physical Education, Band, Orchestra, Chorus,

Drama, Creative Computer Design, and SOMS Investigates.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

All students are required by state law to participate in physical education unless certified by a physician as being incapable of such participation. The physical education program in grades 6 through 8 involves strenuous activity. To guarantee freedom of movement, health, safety and protection, **everyone must change for class**. We recommend the following: gym shorts, T-shirts, socks, sneakers, and sweat suits. Gym clothes should be taken home and washed each week. Jewelry is to be removed for class.

All students must bring in a lock from home to be used in the locker room. This will only be used while students are in PE class, and must be removed after each class.

Students need a note from parent/guardian, or physician to be excused from physical education. The note should be given to the nurse in the morning before period 1. Excuses for more than two days must be from the physician. Grades are based on daily participation, skills, and content knowledge.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

HOMEWORK

Homework is an important part of learning as it provides an opportunity for students to practice and extend skills learned in class. As such, it is included as part of the marking period and final grade averages. Homework is no more than 10% of a marking period grade.

We encourage each student to record all of their homework on a daily basis, and that parents check the agenda each night. For students struggling with homework, we encourage them to take advantage of the conference period to get support from their teacher(s).

MISSED ASSIGNMENTS

If you miss a class for any reason during the day, see the teacher during the conference period to get any assignment you need to complete before class the next day.

If you are absent from school, you will have time to make up your assignments --- usually two days for each day of absence. See your teacher during the conference period the day you return or use one of the many online tools setup by teachers to get any assignments you missed. Students should check Canvas when they are absent.

PROGRESS REPORTS

Progress Reports are sent home at the midpoint of each marking period. All students will receive a minimum of four progress reports.

REPORT CARDS (AVAILABLE ONLINE)

Report cards are available in PowerSchool four times a year. Please refer to the school calendar for those dates. Report card grades represent your progress towards achievement of state and national grade level standards, as determined by various assessments. The letter grade represents a numeric value. Please see the grade scale below.

Grade Scale

A+ = 100 – 97	C+ = 79 - 77
A = 96 - 94	C = 76 - 74
A- = 93 – 90	C- = 73 - 70
B+ = 89 – 87	D+ = 69 - 67
B = 86 – 84	D = 66 - 64
B- = 83 – 80	D- = 63 - 60
	F = Below 60

CONCERNS ABOUT PROGRESS

When a parent is concerned about their child’s academic progress, it is advised that they meet with the teacher to communicate their concern(s), and to develop a plan to address them. To schedule such a meeting, parents can either email the teacher directly, or schedule a team meeting through our guidance secretary, Mrs. Hellstern by calling (973) 378-2772 ex. 2007.

POWERSCHOOL PARENT PORTAL INFORMATION

The PowerSchool Parent Portal is an online resource through which parents and students can check on attendance records, progress report comments, report card grades and midterm/final exam grades. Information on this resource and access codes will be mailed to families at the beginning of the school year. Questions about access codes or other concerns should be addressed to the parent portal email. parentportalhelp@somds.k12.nj.us

HONOR ROLL

Each marking period, the school recognizes students who demonstrate outstanding achievement and effort in all their courses by placing them on either the HONOR ROLL or the HIGH HONOR ROLL.

To achieve placement on the HONOR ROLL, a student cannot have a grade lower than a B- on his/her report card for that marking period.

To achieve placement on the HIGH HONOR ROLL, a student cannot have a grade lower than an A- on his/her report card for that marking period. Please note that all graded subject areas count towards the honor roll. Therefore, it is essential that students put forth their best effort in each and every class.

FIELD TRIPS

Team leaders plan field trips to enhance and extend the curriculum. In the event of academic or behavioral concerns, students may be kept from participating in the event. In these situations, an alternate educational activity will be provided.

While some trips involve costs for transportation and other fees, no child shall be excluded from a trip based on the inability to pay the costs.

SCHOOL SERVICES

GUIDANCE

Every student is assigned a guidance counselor that they will stay with through their three years at SOMS. Assignments this year are as follows:

Ms. Lauren Walsh: (973) 378-2772, ex. 2008

lwalsh@somsd.k12.nj.us

All grades with last names A-K

Mr. Paul Singh: (973) 378-2772, ex. 2009

psingh@somsd.k12.nj.us

All grades with last names L-Z

The counseling program at the middle school is organized to service the academic and social/emotional needs of our students and their parents. The services offered by the counselors range from:

- Individual counseling and support for students struggling academically, socially, or emotionally.
- Group counseling to ease transitions to middle school, develop essential organizational or social skills, or promote healthy social/emotional behaviors.

If you need assistance to deal with a problem causing you concern, please see your counselor for assistance.

MEDICAL

Our nurse's name is Mr. Keith Turpin (973) 378-2772, ex. 2013 kturpin@somsd.k12.nj.us. His office is open from 8:15 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. daily. Mr. Turpin is on hand to respond to emergencies, such as accidents and illness. He also provides health screening and advice to students as needed.

Our medical office also provides yearly screening for hearing, height, weight, blood pressure, vision and scoliosis.

Some important facts for you and your parents to keep in mind:

- Students who have been sent home or have been sick with a fever, are NOT to return to school until they have been without a fever for 24 hours or more based on the illness.
- Medication to be given in school must be accompanied by a physician's order and a

written request from a parent must be kept in the nurse's office.

- Students with diagnosed strep throat or conjunctivitis will not be permitted to re-enter school until they have received prescribed treatment. The nurse must be contacted prior to returning to school.
- If you have a medical condition requiring adjustments in the school program, please ask your parents to notify the school nurse.

SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

The middle school social work program offers students a chance to reflect on this intense and sometimes confusing stage of development. Students, with parental consent, can participate in individual and group counseling opportunities that provide a warm and supportive atmosphere to address the multitude of challenges they face.

The school social work program is directed by Mrs. Alison Steiner, LCSW (973) 378-2772, ex. 2012 asteiner@somsd.k12.nj.us & Fajr Salaam-Goodwin fsalaam@somsd.k12.nj.us (ex.2241) who works with graduate interns from schools of social work in the tri-state area. For more information contact your child's guidance counselor.

LIBRARY

The South Orange Middle School Library is open Monday through Friday from 8:15 a.m. - 3:15 p.m. It has a large collection of books, magazines, and online material to support your learning, as well as your recreational reading. Our website is the gateway to all your research needs. You can access it at www.somslibrary.org. You may sign out all books and materials you wish to borrow from the library, except certain reference works, which do not circulate. Most books may be kept out for two weeks, but some are reserved for overnight use during periods of high demand. **You are responsible for all material you check out and must return books on time so that others may use them.** There is a fine imposed for lost or overdue library materials as well as potential for exclusion from end of year activities until paid or returned.

FOOD SERVICES

Lunch time is 40 minutes long. The cafeteria serves a complete lunch. Lunch may be purchased at a set price for a complete lunch or individual items may be purchased separately OR you may bring your own lunch.

There are a few special rules about behavior in the cafeteria:

- Students are expected to arrive at the cafeteria on time.
- When lining up for lunch or snack, students are not allowed to save a place in line or cut.
- While eating lunch students must remain seated. There will be no more than twelve students sitting at a table.
- When finished with lunch, each student is responsible for cleaning his or her area.
- Do not take any food or drink out of the cafeteria.
- Assigned seats or lunch detention may be assigned for repeated misconduct in the cafeteria.

ORDERING FOOD TO SCHOOL

Ordering food to school is prohibited unless granted special permission from the Principal. If food is delivered, without permission to the school, the office has been instructed to keep the food and contact the parent. The student will not be given the food until the end of the school day. Students without food will always be fed with school lunch.

AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

CONFERENCE PERIOD

The conference period from 2:45 to 3:14p.m is considered part of the regular school day. Your teachers will be here for you during this time. You don't need an appointment to see them if you need help. Take advantage of this opportunity to gain additional support in your studies or seek advice about questions related to school. Teachers can also assign a student to attend the conference period which they are expected to attend. **It is not optional.** Please schedule outside appointments after 3:15 p.m.

AFTER-SCHOOL CLUBS/ACTIVITIES

Becoming involved in an after-school club or activity is an outstanding way to become connected to our school and develop positive relationships with students and teachers who share interests similar to your own. We strongly encourage you to get involved in one of the many school or YouthNet (see below) clubs or activities we have to offer. Clubs generally meet one per month after-school between 3:15-4:15. The school clubs and activities include:

- **Newspaper** (Ms. L. Tazewell)
ltazewel@somsd.k12.nj.us
- **Yearbook** (Ms. G. Catalano)
gcatalano@somsd.k12.nj.us
- **Student Government** (Dr. J. Barnhart & Ms Phelan) jbarnhart@somsd.k12.nj.us
Cphelan@somsd.k12.nj.us
- **MLK Club** (Mr. J. Sumner)
jsumner@somsd.k12.nj.us
- **Band** (Ms. C. DiDiego)
cdidiego@somsd.k12.nj.us
- **Orchestra** (Mr. W. Cook):
wcook@somsd.k12.nj.us
- **Chorus** (Mr. J. Ezzo):
jezzo@somsd.k12.nj.us
- **Intramural Sports** (OPEN)
- **All-school Musical** (Ms. E. Harris):
msharrisnj@gmail.com
- **Science Club** (Ms. N. Chirlo)
nchirlo@somsd.k12.nj.us
- **Model UN** (Mr. J. Cadet)
jcadet@somsd.k12.nj.us
- **Open Gym** (Ms. Garcia & Ms. Noble)
enoble@somsd.k12.nj.us
mgarcia@somsd.k12.nj.us

SOMS YOUTHNET PLUS

SOMS YouthNet Plus is a community organization that provides an after school wrap-around program for SOMS students. The Extended Enrichment Program runs from dismissal until 6:00 pm, Monday-Friday. It includes access to SOMS YouthNet Plus clubs, arts and crafts, open gym, and academic support.

In addition to the Extended Enrichment Program, SOMS YouthNet Plus sponsors after-school clubs for SOMS students. These clubs range from

Cooking to Chess to Step and are open to all SOMS students.

For more information about the Extended Enrichment Program or the after school clubs, please contact Ms. Diane Malloy at youthnetplus@gmail.com.

STUDENT DISCIPLINE POLICIES

(See also District Code of Conduct)

Code of Conduct

At SOMS, we understand that part of our job is to foster sound decision-making skills, and to support students in their efforts to regulate and manage their own behavior, emotions, and impulses. Especially during young adolescence, these are skills that must be explicitly taught and reinforced. This is a responsibility we embrace at SOMS.

The SOMSD Code of Conduct establishes rules and expectations for student behavior in school. These rules also establish consequences for when students violate these rules. We approach these violations with the students as opportunities to learn, and develop in the areas of self-regulation and decision-making. We use a number of interventions that increase in intensity to correct student misbehavior.

If the conduct is repeated, or if the learning process cannot continue, the student will be referred to an administrator. The Administrator may assign one or more of the following:

1. Detention with the teacher from 2:45-3:14 pm
2. Administrative detention from 3:15-4:00 pm
3. Extended detention from 3:05-5:00 pm
4. Parent/ guardian conference
5. Suspension

EXTREME MISBEHAVIOR

(See also District Code of Conduct)

Per the district code of conduct, an administrator may assign severe consequences for certain violations, including suspension or expulsion from school. These violations include:

- Smoking on school grounds or at any school-sponsored activity
- Using, possessing, or selling drugs or alcohol in school or on school grounds

- Fighting, roughhousing, or any activity which would likely result in injury to others
- Refusing to follow a staff directive; offensive language toward a staff member
- Threatening or assaulting another student or staff member (physically or verbally)
- Misusing safety equipment such as fire extinguishers and alarms
- Defacing, vandalizing, or stealing any property --- school or personal

GENERAL INFORMATION

FIRE/EMERGENCY DRILLS

One fire and one emergency drill are conducted each month. Emergency drills include building evacuations, bomb threats, and lock-down drills. It is critical that students remain quiet and follow the directions of the teacher throughout the course of every drill.

LOCKERS

Lockers are school property. You will have the exclusive use of a hall locker near your period 1 class to keep your books and personal property during the school day. Students must have a combination lock to be given access to a locker. Your combination must be kept on file with your period 1 teacher.

The following are times students are permitted to go to their hall locker without a pass:

1. Before 1st period
2. Before lunch period
3. After lunch period
4. After 8th period

You will also have the use of a locker in the gym locker room for which you will need to buy a lock. This locker will hold your personal items while you are taking physical education.

Be sure to lock ALL personal belongings in your locker. SOMS is not responsible for any lost, misplaced, damaged or stolen items.

BACKPACKS

Students are not allowed to carry backpacks during the school day unless students have a medical or otherwise legally documented reason to have one.

All backpacks must be put away and kept in the student's locker at the start of each day. Students may carry a string bag to hold their chromebook & PE clothes.

CELL PHONE & OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Cell phones must be off and out of sight during the school day. They should be kept in the student's personal locker. Cell phones may be used for academic purposes in the classroom **ONLY** when determined by the teacher. If a cell phone is seen or rings while in the building, it will be confiscated and sent to the main office. It will be returned at the end of the day, which is **3:14 pm**. After one warning, parent/caregiver will be notified about consequences, and may be asked to recover the device by signing for it. SOMS is not responsible for lost or stolen cell phones.

If a student needs to call home for any reason, which may include illness or other need, he/she/they must report to the main office or school nurse and use the school phone (Parents and Caregivers, please do not text or call your child's cell phone during the day).

The inappropriate use of cell phones, recording devices, cameras, or any other electronic equipment that has not been authorized, may be deemed an act of HIB and subject to disciplinary consequences, confiscation and/or search. The outcome of that search may result in school sanction and/or a criminal investigation by police.

Missing/Stolen Property

The school is not responsible for lost or stolen items. Students are always expected to have only their property. While the school will attempt to locate personal property, families are encouraged to contact the proper authorities. We maintain a Lost and Found which students are always welcome to check.

NOTICE

The School District of South Orange and Maplewood does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, socio-economic status, or disability in its programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquires with regards to discriminatory concerns and non-discrimination policies:

Dr. Kevin Gilbert
Assistant Superintendent of
Access & Equity
525 Academy Street
Maplewood, New Jersey 07040
973-378-5600, ext. 1825

For further information, call the Office of Civil Rights at 800-421-3481.

*****This Student Handbook has been designed to provide everyone with a base of information. From time to time events may take place that require administrative action beyond that which is found in the Handbook. When and as appropriate, building administrators will take those actions that are prudent and consistent with Board policy.***